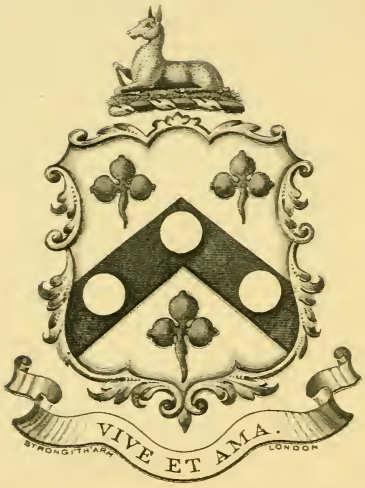
# GREAT PICTURES DESCRIBED BY GREAT WRITERS

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# Great Pictures



BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Fisherman presenting the Ring to the Doge Gradenigo.

*Bordone.*

# Great Pictures

## As Seen and Described by Famous Writers

EDITED AND TRANSLATED

By ESTHER SINGLETON

AUTHOR OF "TURRETS, TOWERS, AND TEMPLES" AND TRANSLATOR OF "THE MUSIC DRAMAS OF RICHARD WAGNER"

*With Numerous Illustrations*

NEW YORK
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# Preface

THE cordial reception of "Turrets, Towers, and Temples" has encouraged me to hope that a welcome may be given to a book treating the masterpieces of painting in a similar manner.

Great writers and literary tourists have occasionally been inspired to record the impressions of their saunterings among galleries and museums. The most interesting of these, not necessarily professional, I have tried to bring together in the following pages. My object has been not to make a selection of the greatest pictures in the world, although many that have that reputation will be found here, but rather to bring together those that have produced a powerful impression on great minds. Consequently, when the reader is disturbed at the omission of some world-famous painting, I beg him to remember my plan and blame the great writers instead of me for neglecting his favourite.

My task has not been a light one. A few words of rapturous admiration are constantly to be met with in the pages of art-lovers, but a sympathetic study of a single work is rarely found. General comment of a given artist's work is also plentiful, while discriminating praise of individual canvases is scanty. The literary selection has, therefore, involved a great deal of research.

From time to time the relative popularity of painters shifts strangely, but no matter what inconstant fashion may dictate, or what may be the cult of the hour, certain paintings never lose their prestige, but annually attract as many pilgrims as Lourdes or Fusi-San.

Of modern painters I have only included Turner and Rossetti.

It is interesting to compare the example I have chosen from Rossetti with Leonardo's "Monna Lisa." Pater has admirably brought out, without dwelling too much upon it, the charm that is eternal in her face as well as the fantastic imagination of the great artist who created her for all time. He says: "The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one. . . . Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the *old* fancy, the symbol of the *modern* idea." In

a similar sense Lilith the siren, the Lorelei, the eternal enchantress, in her modern robe, is the embodiment of a *new* fancy, the symbol of the *ancient* idea; and just here across four centuries the thoughts of two great artists meet.

The types of beauty and women in this book offer no little suggestion to the fancy. From Botticelli's "La Bella Simonetta," and Raphael's "La Fornarina," through all the periods of painting the model has been a great influence upon the painter's work, and upon this point nearly every essayist and critic represented in these pages dwells. In many of the essays, such as Pater's on Botticelli, and Swinburne's on Andrea del Sarto, the author strays away from the painting to talk of the painter, but in doing this he gives us so thoroughly the spirit of that painter that a fuller light is thrown upon the picture before us.

I have included a few criticisms by modern French critics, MM. Valabrègue, Lafond, Giron, Guiffrey, and Reymond, recognized authorities upon the artists whose works they describe; and I have selected Fromentin's valuable essay on "The Night Watch," feeling sure that this thoughtful criticism would interest even the enthusiastic admirers of this enigmatical work.

I have been careful to take no unnecessary liberties with the text. In the translations from Gruyer, Goethe, Fromentin, and others, which were unfortunately too long to be included entire, I have not allowed myself to condense, but only to cut. This is true, also, of the English extracts.

E. S.

New York, *September*, 1899.

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# GREAT PICTURES

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### THE FISHERMAN PRESENTING THE RING TO THE DOGE GRADENIGO

(*BORDONE*)

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

THIS picture, which represents a gondolier returning the ring of Saint Mark to the Doge, treats of a legend, an episode of which Giorgione, as we shall see in the next hall, has also painted in a somewhat singular manner. Here is the story in a few words: One night while the gondolier was sleeping in his gondola, waiting for custom along the canal of S. Giorgio Maggiore, three mysterious individuals jumped into his boat and bade him take them to the Lido; one of the three persons, as well as he could be distinguished in the darkness, appeared to have the beard of an apostle and the figure of a high dignitary of the Church; the two others, by a certain sound as of armour rubbing beneath their mantles, revealed themselves as men-at-arms. The gondolier turned his prow towards the Lido and began to row; but the lagoon, so tranquil at their departure, began to chop and swell strangely: the waves

gleamed with sinster lights; monstrous apparitions were outlined menacingly around the barque to the great terror of the gondolier; and hideous spirits of evil and devils half man half fish seemed to be swimming from the Lido towards Venice, making the waves emit thousands of sparks and exciting the tempest with whistling and fiendish laughter in the storm; but the appearance of the shining swords of the two knights and the extended hand of the saintly personage made them recoil and vanish in sulphurous explosions.

The battle lasted for a long time; new demons constantly succeeded the others; however, the victory remained with the personages in the boat, who had themselves taken back to the landing of the Piazzetta. The gondolier scarcely knew what to think of their strange conduct; until, as they were about to separate, the oldest of the group, suddenly causing his nimbus to shine out again, said to the gondolier: "I am Saint Mark, the patron of Venice. I learned to-night that the devils assembled in convention at the Lido in the cemetery of the Jews, had formed the resolution of exciting a frightful tempest and overthrowing my beloved city, under the pretext that many excesses are committed there which give the evil spirits power over her inhabitants; but as Venice is a good Catholic and will confess her sins in the beautiful cathedral which she has raised to me, I resolved to defend her from this peril of which she was ignorant, by the aid of these two brave companions, Saint George and Saint Theodore, and I have borrowed thy boat; now, as all trouble merits reward, and as thou hast passed a boisterous night, here is my ring; carry it to the

Doge and tell him what thou hast seen. He will fill thy cap with golden sequins."

So saying, the Saint resumed his position on the top of the porch of Saint Mark's, Saint Theodore climbed to the top of his column, where his crocodile was grumbling with ill-humour, and Saint George went to squat in the depths of his columned niche in the great window of the Ducal Palace.

The gondolier, rather astonished, and he had reason enough, would have believed that he had been dreaming after drinking during that evening several glasses too many of the wine of Samos, if the large and heavy golden ring studded with precious stones which he held in his hand had not prevented his doubting the reality of the events of the night.

Therefore, he went to find the Doge, who was presiding over the Senate in his cap of office, and, respectfully kneeling before him, he related the story of the battle between the devils and the patron saints of Venice. At first this story seemed incredible; but the return of the ring, which was in very sooth that of Saint Mark, and the absence of which from the church treasury was established, proved the gondolier's veracity. This ring, locked up under triple keys in a carefully-guarded treasury, the bolts of which showed no trace of disturbance, could only have been removed by supernatural means. They filled the gondolier's cap with gold and celebrated a mass of thanksgiving for the peril they had escaped. This did not prevent the Venetians from continuing their dissolute course of life, from spending their nights in the haunts of play, at gay

suppers, and in love-making; in masking for intrigues, and in prolonging the long orgy of their carnival for six months in the year. The Venetians counted upon the protection of Saint Mark to go to paradise and they took no other care of their salvation. That was Saint Mark's affair; they had built him a fine church for that, and the Saint was still under obligations to them.

The moment selected by Paris Bordone is that when the gondolier falls on his knees before the Doge. The composition of the scene is very picturesque; you see in perspective a long row of the brown or grey heads of senators of the most magisterial character. Curious spectators are on the steps, forming happily-contrasted groups: the beautiful Venetian costume is displayed here in all its splendour. Here, as in all the canvases of this school, an important place is given to architecture. The background is occupied by fine porticos in the style of Palladio, animated with people coming and going. This picture possesses the merit, sufficiently rare in the Italian school, which is almost exclusively occupied with the reproduction of religious or mythological subjects, of representing a popular legend, a scene of manners, in a word, a romantic subject such as Delacroix or Louis Boulanger might have chosen and treated according to his own special talent; and this gives it a character of its own and an individual charm.

*Voyage en Italie* (Paris, new ed., 1884).

## THE BIRTH OF VENUS

### (*BOTTICELLI*)

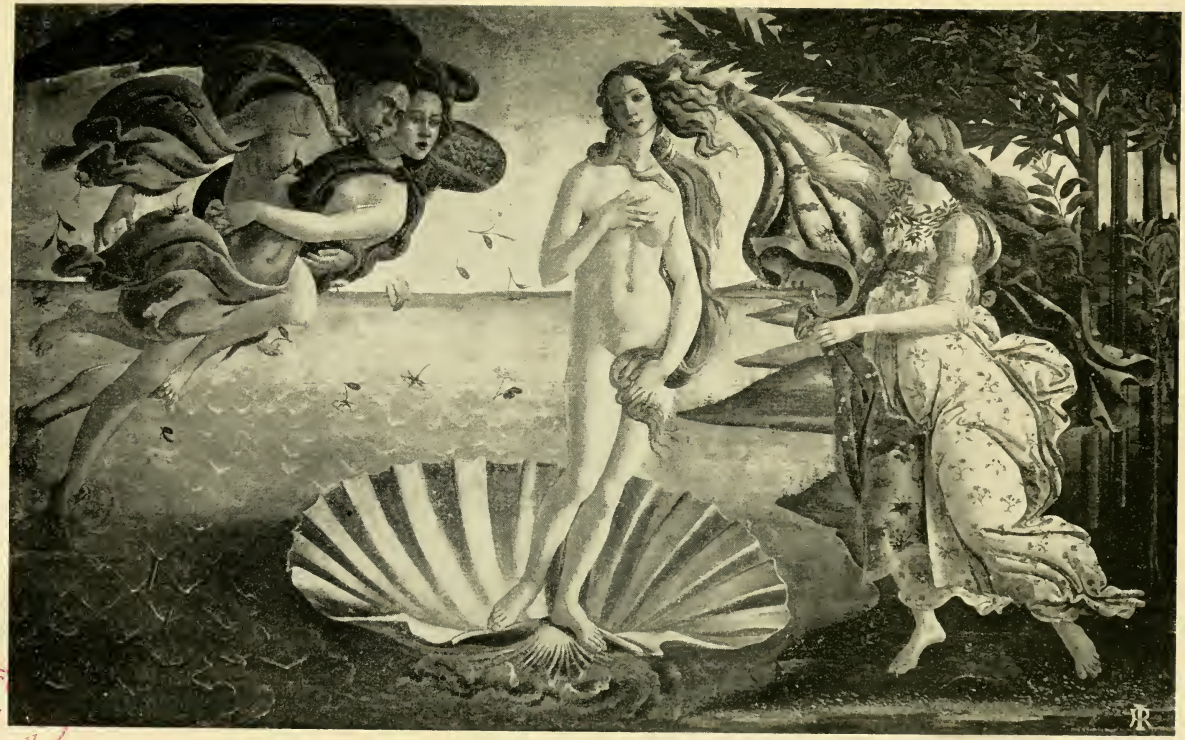
WALTER PATER

IN Leonardo's treatise on painting only one contemporary is mentioned by name — Sandro Botticelli. This pre-eminence may be due to chance only, but to some will rather appear a result of deliberate judgment; for people have begun to find out the charm of Botticelli's work, and his name, little known in the last century, is quietly becoming important. In the middle of the Fifteenth Century he had already anticipated much of that meditative subtlety which is sometimes supposed peculiar to the great imaginative workmen of its close. Leaving the simple religion which had occupied the followers of Giotto for a century, and the simple naturalism which had grown out of it, a thing of birds and flowers only, he sought inspiration in what to him were works of the modern world, the writings of Dante and Boccaccio, and in new readings of his own of classical stories; or if he painted religious subjects, painted them with an undercurrent of original sentiment which touches you as the real matter of the picture through the veil of its ostensible subject. What is the peculiar sensation, what is the peculiar quality of pleasure which his work has the prop-

erty of exciting in us, and which we cannot get elsewhere? For this, especially when he has to speak of a comparatively unknown artist, is always the chief question which a critic has to answer.

In an age when the lives of artists were full of adventure, his life is almost colourless. Criticism indeed has cleared away much of the gossip which Vasari accumulated, has touched the legend of Lippo and Lucrezia, and rehabilitated the character of Andrea del Castagno; but in Botticelli's case there is no legend to dissipate. He did not even go by his true name: Sandro is a nickname, and his true name is Filipepi, Botticelli being only the name of the goldsmith who first taught him art. Only two things happened to him, two things which he shared with other artists — he was invited to Rome to paint in the Sistine Chapel, and he fell in later life under the influence of Savonarola, passing apparently almost out of men's sight in a sort of religious melancholy which lasted till his death in 1515, according to the received date. Vasari says that he plunged into the study of Dante, and even wrote a comment on the *Divine Comedy*. But it seems strange that he should have lived on inactive so long; and one almost wishes that some document might come to light which, fixing the date of his death earlier, might relieve one, in thinking of him, of his dejected old age.

He is before all things a poetical painter, blending the charm of story and sentiment, the medium of the art of poetry, with the charm of line and colour, the medium of abstract painting. So he becomes the illustrator of Dante. In a few rare examples of the edition of 1481, the blank



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THE BIRTH OF VENUS.

*Botticelli.*

spaces left at the beginning of every canto for the hand of the illuminator have been filled as far as the nineteenth canto of the *Inferno*, with impressions of engraved plates, seemingly by way of experiment, for in the copy in the Bodleian Library, one of the three impressions it contains has been printed upside down and much awry in the midst of the luxurious printed page. Giotto, and the followers of Giotto, with their almost childish religious aim, had not learned to put that weight of meaning into outward things, light, colour, every-day gesture, which the poetry of the *Divine Comedy* involves, and before the Fifteenth Century Dante could hardly have found an illustrator. Botticelli's illustrations are crowded with incident, blending with a naïve carelessness of pictorial propriety three phases of the same scene into one plate. The grotesques, so often a stumbling-block to painters who forget that the words of a poet, which only feebly present an image to the mind, must be lowered in key when translated into form, make one regret that he has not rather chosen for illustration the more subdued imagery of the *Purgatorio*. Yet in the scene of those who go down quick into hell there is an invention about the fire taking hold on the up-turned soles of the feet, which proves that the design is no mere translation of Dante's words, but a true painter's vision; while the scene of the Centaurs wins one at once, for, forgetful of the actual circumstances of their appearance, Botticelli has gone off with delight on the thought of the Centaurs themselves, bright small creatures of the woodland, with arch baby faces and mignon forms, drawing tiny bows.

Botticelli lived in a generation of naturalists, and he

might have been a mere naturalist among them. There are traces enough in his work of that alert sense of outward things which, in the pictures of that period, fills the lawns with delicate living creatures, and the hill-sides with pools of water, and the pools of water with flowering reeds. But this was not enough for him; he is a visionary painter, and in his visionariness he resembles Dante. Giotto, the tried companion of Dante, Masaccio, Ghirlandaio even, do but transcribe with more or less refining the outward image; they are dramatic, not visionary painters; they are almost impassive spectators of the action before them. But the genius of which Botticelli is the type usurps the data before it as the exponents of ideas, moods, visions of its own; with this interest it plays fast and loose with those data, rejecting some and isolating others, and always combining them anew. To him, as to Dante, the scene, the colour, the outward image or gesture, comes with all its incisive and importunate reality; but awakes in him, moreover, by some subtle structure of his own, a mood which it awakes in no one else, of which it is the double or repetition, and which it clothes, that all may share it, with sensuous circumstances.

But he is far enough from accepting the conventional orthodoxy of Dante which, referring all human action to the easy formula of purgatory, heaven, and hell, leaves an insoluble element of prose in the depths of Dante's poetry. One picture of his, with the portrait of the donor, Matteo Palmieri, below, had the credit or discredit of attracting some shadow of ecclesiastical censure. This Matteo Palmieri — two dim figures move under that name in con-

temporary history — was the reputed author of a poem, still unedited, *La Città Divina*, which represented the human race as an incarnation of those angels who, in the revolt of Lucifer, were neither for God nor for his enemies, a fantasy of that earlier Alexandrian philosophy, about which the Florentine intellect in that century was so curious. Botticelli's picture may have been only one of those familiar compositions in which religious reverie has recorded its impressions of the various forms of beatified existence — *Glorias*, as they were called, like that in which Giotto painted the portrait of Dante; but somehow it was suspected of embodying in a picture the wayward dream of Palmieri, and the chapel where it hung was closed. Artists so entire as Botticelli are usually careless about philosophical theories, even when the philosopher is a Florentine of the Fifteenth Century, and his work a poem in *terza rima*. But Botticelli, who wrote a commentary on Dante and became the disciple of Savonarola, may well have let such theories come and go across him. True or false, the story interprets much of the peculiar sentiment with which he infuses his profane and sacred persons, comely, and in a certain sense like angels, but with a sense of displacement or loss about them — the wistfulness of exiles conscious of a passion and energy greater than any known issue of them explains, which runs through all his varied work with a sentiment of ineffable melancholy.

So just what Dante scorns as unworthy alike of heaven and hell, Botticelli accepts, that middle world in which men take no side in great conflicts, and decide no great causes, and make great refusals. He thus sets for himself

the limits within which art, undisturbed by any moral ambition, does its most sincere and surest work. His interest is neither in the untempered goodness of Angelico's saints, nor the untempered evil of Orcagna's *Inferno;* but with men and women in their mixed and uncertain condition, always attractive, clothed sometimes by passion with a character of loveliness and energy, but saddened perpetually by the shadow upon them of the great things from which they shrink. His morality is all sympathy; and it is this sympathy, conveying into his work somewhat more than is usual of the true complexion of humanity, which makes him, visionary as he is, so forcible a realist.

It is this which gives to his Madonnas their unique expression and charm. He has worked out in them a distinct and peculiar type, definite enough in his own mind, for he has painted it over and over again, sometimes one might think almost mechanically, as a pastime during that dark period when his thoughts were so heavy upon him. Hardly any collection of note is without one of these circular pictures, into which the attendant angels depress their heads so naïvely. Perhaps you have sometimes wondered why those peevish-looking Madonnas, conformed to no acknowledged or obvious type of beauty, attract you more and more, and often come back to you when the Sistine Madonna and the virgins of Fra Angelico are forgotten. At first, contrasting them with those, you may have thought that there was even something in them mean or abject, for the abstract lines of the face have little nobleness and the colour is wan. For with Botticelli she too, though she holds in her hands the "Desire of all nations," is one of

those who are neither for God nor for his enemies; and her choice is on her face. The white light on it is cast up hard and cheerless from below, as when snow lies upon the ground, and the children look up with surprise at the strange whiteness of the ceiling. Her trouble is in the very caress of the mysterious child, whose gaze is always far from her, and who has already that sweet look of devotion which men have never been able altogether to love, and which still makes the born saint an object almost of suspicion to his earthly brethren. Once, indeed, he guides her hand to transcribe in a book the words of her exaltation, the *Ave* and the *Magnificat*, and the *Gaude Maria*, and the young angels, glad to rouse her for a moment from her dejection, are eager to hold the inkhorn and support the book; but the pen almost drops from her hand, and the high cold words have no meaning for her, and her true children are those others, in the midst of whom, in her rude home, the intolerable honour came to her, with that look of wistful inquiry on their irregular faces which you see in startled animals — gipsy children, such as those who, in Apennine villages, still hold out their long brown arms to beg of you, but on Sundays become *enfants du chœur*, with their thick black hair nicely combed and fair white linen on their sunburnt throats.

What is strangest is that he carries this sentiment into classical subjects, its most complete expression being a picture in the Uffizi, of Venus rising from the sea, in which the grotesque emblems of the middle age, and a landscape full of its peculiar feeling, and even its strange draperies powdered all over in the Gothic manner with a quaint con-

ceit of daisies, frame a figure that reminds you of the faultless nude studies of Ingres. At first, perhaps, you are attracted only by a quaintness of design, which seems to recall all at once whatever you have read of Florence in the Fifteenth Century; afterwards you may think that this quaintness must be incongruous with the subject, and that the colour is cadaverous, or at least cold. And yet the more you come to understand what imaginative colouring really is, that all colour is no mere delightful quality of natural things, but a spirit upon them by which they become expressive to the spirit, the better you will like this peculiar quality of colour; and you will find that quaint design of Botticelli's a more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves even of the finest period. Of the Greeks as they really were, of their difference from ourselves, of the aspects of their outward life, we know far more than Botticelli, or his most learned contemporaries; but for us, long familiarity has taken off the edge of the lesson, and we are hardly conscious of what we owe to the Hellenic spirit. But in pictures like this of Botticelli's you have a record of the first impression made by it on minds turned back towards it in almost painful aspiration from a world in which it had been ignored so long; and in the passion, the energy, the industry of realization, with which Botticelli carries out his intention, is the exact measure of the legitimate influence over the human mind of the imaginative system of which this is the central myth. The light is, indeed, cold — mere sunless dawn; but a later painter would have cloyed you with sunshine; and you can see the better for that quietness in the morn-

ing air each long promontory as it slopes down to the water's edge. Men go forth to their labours until the evening; but she is awake before them, and you might think that the sorrow in her face was at the thought of the whole long day of love yet to come. An emblematical figure of the wind blows hard across the grey water, moving forward the dainty-lipped shell on which she sails, the sea "showing his teeth" as it moves in thin lines of foam, and sucking in one by one the falling roses, each severe in outline, plucked off short at the stalk, but embrowned a little, as Botticelli's flowers always are. Botticelli meant all that imagery to be altogether pleasurable; and it was partly an incompleteness of resources, inseparable from the art of that time, that subdued and chilled it; but his predilection for minor tones counts also; and what is unmistakable is the sadness with which he has conceived the goddess of pleasure as the depository of a great power over the lives of men.

I have said that the peculiar character of Botticelli is the result of a blending in him of a sympathy for humanity in its uncertain condition, its attractiveness, its investiture at rarer moments in a character of loveliness and energy, with his consciousness of the shadow upon it of the great things from which it shrinks, and that this conveys into his work somewhat more than painting usually attains of the true complexion of humanity. He paints the story of the goddess of pleasure in other episodes besides that of her birth from the sea, but never without some shadow of death in the grey flesh and wan flowers. He paints Madonnas, but they shrink from the pressure of the divine child, and plead

in unmistakable undertones for a warmer, lower humanity. The same figure — tradition connects it with Simonetta, the mistress of Giuliano de' Medici — appears again as Judith returning home across the hill country when the great deed is over, and the moment of revulsion come, and the olive branch in her hand is becoming a burthen; as Justice, sitting on a throne, but with a fixed look of self-hatred which makes the sword in her hand seem that of a suicide; and again as Veritas in the allegorical picture of Calumnia, where one may note in passing the suggestiveness of an accident which identifies the image of Truth with the person of Venus. We might trace the same sentiment through his engravings; but his share in them is doubtful, and the object of this fragment has been attained if I have defined aright the temper in which he worked.

But, after all, it may be asked, is a painter like Botticelli, a second-rate painter, a proper subject for general criticism? There are a few great painters, like Michael Angelo or Leonardo, whose work has become a force in general culture, partly for this very reason that they have absorbed into themselves all such workmen as Sandro Botticelli; and, over and above mere technical or antiquarian criticism, general criticism may be very well employed in that sort of interpretation which adjusts the position of these men to general culture, whereas smaller men can be the proper subjects only of technical or antiquarian treatment. But, besides those great men, there is a certain number of artists who have a distinct faculty of their own by which they convey to us a peculiar quality of pleasure which we cannot get elsewhere, and these, too,

have their place in general culture, and have to be interpreted to it by those who have felt their charm strongly, and are often the objects of a special diligence and a consideration wholly affectionate, just because there is not about them the stress of a great name and authority. Of this select number Botticelli is one; he has the freshness, the uncertain and diffident promise which belongs to the earlier Renaissance itself, and makes it perhaps the most interesting period in the history of the mind; in studying his work one begins to understand to how great a place in human culture the art of Italy had been called.

*Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London, 1873).

## THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

### (*VERONESE*)

### JOHN RUSKIN

THIS picture is at Turin, and is of quite inestimable value. It is hung high; and the really principal figure — the Solomon, being in the shade, can hardly be seen, but is painted with Veronese's utmost tenderness, in the bloom of perfect youth, his hair golden, short, crisply curled. He is seated high on his lion throne; two elders on each side beneath him, the whole group forming a tower of solemn shade. I have alluded, elsewhere, to the principle on which all the best composers act, of supporting these lofty groups by some vigorous mass of foundation. This column of noble shade is curiously sustained. A falconer leans forward from the left-hand side, bearing on his wrist a snow-white falcon, its wings spread, and brilliantly relieved against the purple robe of one of the elders. It touches with its wings one of the golden lions of the throne, on which the light also flashes strongly; thus forming, together with it, the lion and eagle symbol, which is the type of Christ, throughout mediæval work. In order to show the meaning of this symbol, and that Solomon is typically invested with the Christian royalty, one of the elders by a bold anachronism, holds a jewel in his hand in the shape of a cross, with which he (by accident of ges-



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THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

*Veronese.*

ture) points to Solomon; his other hand is laid on an open book.

The group opposite, of which the Queen forms the centre, is also painted with Veronese's highest skill; but contains no point of interest bearing on our present subject, except its connection by a chain of descending emotion. The Queen is wholly oppressed and subdued; kneeling, and nearly fainting, she looks up to Solomon with tears in her eyes; he, startled by fear for her, stoops forward from the throne, opening his right hand, as if to support her, so as almost to drop the sceptre. At her side her first maid of honour is kneeling also, but does not care about Solomon; and is gathering up her dress that it may not be crushed; and looking back to encourage a negro girl, who, carrying two toy-birds, made of enamel and jewels, for presentation to the King, is frightened at seeing her Queen fainting, and does not know what she ought to do; while lastly, the Queen's dog, another of the little fringy paws, is wholly unabashed by Solomon's presence, or anybody else's; and stands with his forelegs well apart, right in front of his mistress, thinking everybody has lost their wits; and barking violently at one of the attendants, who has set down a golden vase disrespectfully near him.

*Modern Painters* (London, 1860).

## THE LAST JUDGMENT

### (*MICHAEL ANGELO*)

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

WHILE Michael Angelo worked upon his *Moses*, Clement VII., following the example of Julius II., would not leave him alone for a moment. It was a trick of all these Popes to exact from the poor artist something different to what he was doing at the time. To obtain some respite, he was forced to promise the Pope that he would occupy himself at the same time with the cartoon of *The Last Judgment*. But Clement VII. was not a man to be put off with words; he supervised the work in person, and Buonarroti was obliged to pass continually from the chisel to the pencil and from the pen to the mallet. *The Last Judgment! Moses!* these are two works of little importance and easy to do off-hand! And yet he had to. His Holiness would not listen to reason.

One day it was announced to Michael Angelo that he would not receive his accustomed visit: Clement VII. was dead. The artist breathed freely just during the Conclave.

The new Pope, Paul III., had nothing more pressing to do than to present himself in Buonarroti's studio, followed pompously by ten cardinals. The newly-elected Pope was easily recognized there!



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THE LAST JUDGMENT.
*Michael Angelo.*

"Ah!" said the Holy Father, in a tone of firm decision, "I hope that henceforth the whole of your time will belong to me, Maestro Buonarroti."

"May your Holiness deign to excuse me," replied Michael Angelo, "but I have just signed an engagement with the Duke of Urbino, which forces me to finish the tomb of Pope Julius."

"What!" exclaimed Paul III.: "for thirty years I have had a certain wish and now that I am Pope I cannot realize it!"

"But the contract, Holy Father, the contract!"

"Where is this contract? I will tear it up."

"Ah!" exclaimed in his turn the Cardinal of Mantua, who was one of the suite, "your Holiness should see the *Moses* which Maestro Michael Angelo has just finished: that statue alone would more than suffice to honour the memory of Julius."

"Cursed flatterer!" muttered Michael Angelo in a low voice.

"Come, come, I will take charge of this matter myself," said the Pope. "You shall only make three statues with your own hand: the rest shall be given to other sculptors, and I will answer for the Duke of Urbino's consent. And now, Maestro, to the Sistine Chapel. A great empty wall is waiting for you there."

What could Michael Angelo reply to such an emphatic wish expressed so distinctly? He finished in his best style his two statues of *Active Life* and *Contemplative Life* — Dante's symbolical Rachel and Leah — and not wishing to profit by this new arrangement to which he was forced to

submit, he added fifteen hundred and twenty-four ducats to the four thousand he had received, to pay with his own gains for the works confided to the other artists.

Having thus terminated this unfortunate affair, which had caused him so much worry and fatigue, Michael Angelo was at last enabled to occupy himself exclusively with the execution of his *Last Judgment*, to which he devoted no less than eight to nine years.

This immense and unique picture, in which the human figure is represented in all possible attitudes, where every sentiment, every passion, every reflection of thought, and every aspiration of the soul are rendered with inimitable perfection, has never been equalled and never will be equalled in the domain of Art.

This time the genius of Michael Angelo simply attacked the infinite. The subject of this vast composition, the manner in which it is conceived and executed, the admirable variety and the learned disposition of the groups, the inconceivable boldness and firmness of the outlines, the contrast of light and shade, the difficulties, I might almost say the impossibilities vanquished, as if it were all mere play, and with a happiness that savours of prodigy, the unity of the whole and the perfection of the details, make *The Last Judgment* the most complete and the greatest picture in existence. It is broad and magnificent in effect, and yet each part of this prodigious painting gains infinitely when seen and studied quite near; and we do not know of any easel-picture worked upon with such patience and finished with such devotion.

The painter could only choose one scene, several isolated

groups, in this appalling drama which will be enacted on the last day in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where all the generations of man shall be gathered together. And yet, admire the omnipotence of genius! With nothing but a single episode in a restricted space, and solely by the expression of the human body, the artist has succeeded in striking you with astonishment and terror, and in making you really a spectator of the supreme catastrophe.

At the base of the picture, very nearly in the centre, you perceive the boat of the *Inferno*, a fantastic reminiscence borrowed from Pagan tradition, in accordance with which first the poet and then the painter were pleased to clothe an accursed being with the form and occupation of Charon.

"Charon with the eyes of burning embers gathering together with a gesture all these souls, and striking with his oar those who hesitate." [1]

It is impossible to form an idea of the incredible science displayed by Michael Angelo in the varied contortions of the damned, heaped one upon the other in the fatal bark. All the violent contractions, all the visible tortures, all the frightful shrinkings that suffering, despair, and rage can produce upon human muscles are rendered in this group with a realism that would make the most callous shudder. To the left of this bark you see the gaping mouth of a cavern; this is the entrance to Purgatory, where several demons are in despair because they have no more souls to torment.

This first group, which very naturally attracts the spectator's attention, is that of the dead whom the piercing

[1] Dante, *Inferno* III.

sound of the eternal trumpet has awakened in their tombs. Some of them shake off their shrouds, others with great difficulty open their eyelids made heavy by their long sleep. Towards the angle of the picture there is a monk who is pointing out the Divine Judge with his left hand; this monk is the portrait of Michael Angelo.

The second group is formed of the resuscitated ones who ascend of themselves to the Judgment. These figures, many of which are sublime in expression, rise more or less lightly into space, according to the burden of their sins, of which they must render account.

The third group, also ascending to the right of Christ, is that of the Blessed. Among all these saints, some of whom show the instrument of their execution, others the marks of their martyrdom, there is one head especially remarkable for beauty and tenderness: it is that of a mother who is protecting her daughter, turning her eyes, filled with faith and hope, towards the Christ.

Above the host of saints, you see a fourth group of angelic spirits, some bearing the Cross, others the Crown of Thorns, — instruments and emblems of the Saviour's Passion.

The fifth group, parallel to the fourth which we have just pointed out, is composed of angels; such, at least, they seem to be by the splendour of their youth and the aerial lightness of their movements; and these also bear, as if in triumph, other emblems of the divine expiation — the column, the ladder, and the sponge.

Above these angels, on the same plane as the saints and to the left of Christ, is the choir of the just; the patriarchs,

the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, and the holy personages form this sixth group.

The seventh is the most horrible of all and the one in which the art of Michael Angelo has displayed itself in all its terrific grandeur: it is composed of the rejected ones, overwhelmed by the decree and led away to punishment by the rebel angels. The very coldest spectator could not remain unmoved by this spectacle. You believe yourself in hell; you hear the cries of anguish and the gnashing of the teeth of the wretched, who, according to the terrible Dantesque expression, vainly desire a second death.

The eighth, ninth, and tenth groups, occupying the base of the composition, are composed, as we have already said, of the bark of Charon, the grotto of Purgatory, and the Angels of Judgment, eight in number, blowing their brazen trumpets with all their might to convoke the dead from the four quarters of the earth.

Finally, in the eleventh group, in the centre, very near the upper part of the picture, between the two companies of the blessed, and seated upon the clouds, the sovereign Judge with a terrible action hurls his malediction upon the condemned: "*Ite maledicti in ignem aeternum.*" The Virgin turns away her head and trembles. On Christ's right is Adam, and on his left, St. Peter. They have exactly the same positions assigned to them by Dante in his *Paradiso*.

This immense work was exhibited to the public on Christmas Day, 1541. It had cost eight years of work. Michael Angelo was then sixty-seven years old.

Several anecdotes relating to this great picture have come down to us.

It is related that the Pope, scandalized at the nudity of certain figures, a nudity which Daniele da Volterra was afterwards charged to clothe, sent word to Michael Angelo that he must cover them.

Michael Angelo replied with his usual brusqueness:

"Tell the Pope that he must employ himself a little less in correcting my pictures, which is very easy, and employ himself a little more in reforming men, which is very difficult."

It is said that Maestro Biaggio, master of ceremonies to Paul III., having accompanied the Pope on a visit that His Holiness made to see Michael Angelo's fresco when it was about half finished, allowed himself to express his own opinion upon *The Last Judgment*.

"Holy Father," said the good Messer Biaggio, "if I dare pronounce my judgment, this picture seems more appropriate to figure in a tavern than in the chapel of a Pope."

Unfortunately for the master of ceremonies, Michael Angelo was behind him and did not lose a word of Messer Biaggio's compliment. The Pope had scarcely gone before the irritated artist, wishing to make an example as a warning for all future critics, placed this Messer Biaggio in his hell, well and duly, under the scarcely flattering guise of Minos. That was always Dante's way when he wanted to avenge himself upon an enemy.

I leave you to imagine the lamentations and complaints of the poor master of ceremonies when he saw himself damned in this manner. He threw himself at the Pope's feet, declaring that he would never arise unless His Holiness would have him taken out of hell: that was the most

important thing. As for the punishment, that the painter deserved for this dreadful sacrilege, Messer Biaggio would leave that entirely to the high impartiality of the Holy Father.

"Messer Biaggio," replied Paul III. with as much seriousness as he could maintain, "you know that I have received from God an absolute power in heaven and upon the earth, but I can do nothing in hell; therefore you must remain there."

While Michael Angelo was working at his picture of *The Last Judgment*, he fell from the scaffold and seriously injured his leg. Soured by pain and seized with an attack of misanthropy, the painter shut himself up in his house and would not see any one.

But he reckoned without his physician; and the physician this time was as stubborn as the invalid.

This excellent disciple of Æsculapius was named Baccio Rontini. Having learned by chance of the accident that had befallen the great artist, he presented himself before his house and knocked in vain at the door.

No response.

He shouted, he flew into a passion, and he called the neighbours and the servants in a loud voice.

Complete silence.

He goes to find a ladder, places it against the front of the house, and tries to enter by the casements. The windows are hermetically sealed and the shutters are fast.

What is to be done? Any one else in the physician's place would have given up; but Rontini was not the man

to be discouraged for so little. With much difficulty he enters the cellar and with no less trouble he goes up into Buonarroti's room, and, partly by acquiescence and partly by force, he triumphantly tends his friend's leg.

It was quite time: exasperated by his sufferings, the artist had resolved to let himself die.

*Trois Maîtres* (Paris, 1861).

## MAGDALEN IN THE DESERT

### (*CORREGGIO*)

AIMÉ GIRON

CORREGGIO was a painter and a poet at the same time, interpreting Nature, flattering her, idealizing her, and realizing her creations in their double æsthetic expression, with undulating outlines and tender tones. His drawing was modelled and supple, with a certain vigour of line and a certain solidity of relief. He had a charming imagination of conception and a voluptuous grace in its accomplishment, which are requisites in the painting of women and children. He therefore excelled in rendering *bambini*. With a note-book in his hand, he studied them everywhere. This explains why his Loves and his Cherubs have such rare truth of mien, of flesh, and of life. His knowledge of anatomy is great and he foreshortens on canvas and ceiling astonishingly before the advent of Michael Angelo. His enchanting colouring, impasted like that of Giorgione, vivid as that of Titian, ran through the most delicate gradations and melted into the most elusive harmonies. Beneath his facile brush, soft and thick, the transparencies of the skin and the morbidezza of the flesh become ideal.

He was the first to apply himself to the choice of fabrics, and one of the first in Italy to attend to the

scientific distribution of light. But, in the famous *chiaroscuro* he does not get his effects by contrasts, but by analogies, superimposing shadow upon shadow and light upon light, both being disposed in large masses and graduated in progression. This process occurs at its fullest in the *Christmas Night*, where the moon shines, and the child glows with radiance, in a kind of symbolic struggle between the natural light of this world and the supernatural light of the other. The effect is such that the spectator is forced instinctively to blink his eyes, as does the Shepherdess herself entering the stable.

"When Correggio excels he is a painter worthy of Athens," wrote Diderot, whose art criticism had in it more of sentiment than knowledge.

"With Correggio everything is large and graceful," said Louis Carrache, who gave Correggio a large place in his eclecticism. But after studying and weighing everything, from his somewhat excessive qualities it follows that Correggio was more of an idealist than a mystic and obeyed Art more than Faith, with a leaning towards the apotheosis of form. He painted *Io and Jupiter* for Frederick Gonzaga of Mantua. This picture having passed to the son of the Regent, the two passionate heads so strongly troubled his prudery that he cut them out and burned them. Coypel then begged the Prince to spare the rest and to give it to him. He obtained it on condition that "he would make good use of it," and on the death of Coypel, M. Pasquier, *député du Commerce de Rouen*, paid 16,500 *livres* for the mutilated remains, as I find in a very old account.



MAGDALEN.
*Correggio.*

All the great museums of the world possess Correggios, and I will only mention the exquisite *Saint Catherine* and the resplendent *Antiope* of the Louvre; the *Danaë* of the Borghese Gallery, a *chef-d'œuvre* of grace and delicacy; and, finally, in the Dresden Gallery, our *Magdalen in the Desert*, that jewel so well-known and so often reproduced.

This Magdalen as a matter of fact holds the first place among the small Correggios. There are two kinds of Magdalens in art: I. the Repentant, emaciated, growing ugly, disfigured by tears and penitence at the end of her life, with a skull in her hand or before her eyes, not having had even — like the one sculptured in the Cathedral of Rouen — "for three times ten winters any other vesture than her long hair," according to Petrarch's verse; II. the Sinner, always young, always beautiful, always seductive, who has not lost any of her charms nor even of her coquetry, and with whom the Book of Life takes the place of the Death's Head.

Our Magdalen belongs to the latter class. In a solitary spot, but attractive with its verdure and rocks, on a grassy knoll the saint is stretched out at full length, with her shoulder, her bosom, her arms, and her feet adorably bare. A blue fabric drapes the rest of her body and forms a coquettish hood for her head and neck. Her flesh has a robust elegance of line. Leaning on her right elbow, her hand, half hidden in her hair, supports a charming and meditative head, while her other arm is slipped under an open manuscript. Her hair, long and blonde, according to legend — which she loves and still cares for because it once wiped the feet of her Saviour — falls in thick curls,

or strays at will with a premeditated abandon. On the ground, to her right, stands the vase of perfumes of her first adoration; to the left are the stones of her supreme expiation.

What grace in her attitude! What beauty of form! She is thrown in with a rare happiness and painted with an exquisite delicacy of touch and tint. The blue drapery upon the green landscape defines her sufficiently without making her stand out too much, leaving the figure and the landscape to mingle without disturbing each other in skilful harmony. All of this is in most finished execution, a little elaborate, perhaps, and the expression of the face reflects the sweet, sad memory of the Beloved, whose Gospels she is reading, just as one reads again tender letters of the past.

This work was executed for the Dukes of Este, who kept it in a silver frame studded with precious stones and used it as an ornament for their bedrooms, and when they travelled, they took it with them in a casket. When the King of Poland became its possessor, he gave it a second boxing of glass with lock and key. In 1788, this masterpiece having been stolen, 1,000 ducats were promised for its discovery, and, in consideration of that sum, the thief denounced himself. Cristofano Allori, the greatest Florentine painter of the Decadence, made a superb copy for the Offices, I believe.

This Magdalen of Correggio's, "the least converted of sinners and the most adorable of penitents," is she really, historically and liturgically the Magdalen of the House of Bethany, of the grotto de la Sainte-Baume in Provence?

No. She recalls rather "*cette dame de marque*" who was evoked in the Seventeenth Century by the Carmelite Father Pierre de Saint-Louis in his sublime poem of accomplished burlesque; and does not the following verse hum in your ear:

"*Lèvres dont l'incarnat faisant voir à la fois*
*Un rosier sans épine, un chapelet sans croix,*"

while the sinner

"*. . . s'occupe à punir le forfait*
*De son temps prétérit qui ne fut qu'imparfait*"?

This evidently is not at all the art of the Middle Ages, nor its saints, whose vestment was sackcloth and whose body was a mere lay figure for a soul devoted entirely to purity, to simplicity, to mysticism, and to the other world. In the Sixteenth Century, however, people took the sackcloth from the saints and dressed them in flesh. Then was produced a kind of revival of paganism, of naturalism, of life; and religious art, in its flesh and colouring, no longer created anything but an Olympus of beautiful maidens, or, at least, noble goddesses. Correggio's Magdalen belongs to this artistic cycle and the painter executed it in the noonday splendour of those qualities, the dawn of which glows in Parma at St. Paul's. Correggio is not a mystic, he is a voluptuous naturalist, and from him to the realist Caravaggio, "the grinder of flesh," and the exuberant Rubens, who gave much study to Correggio, the distance is not very great and the decline is fatal. But, in the meantime, where shall we find more grace, or seductiveness — under this conversion complicated with memories — than in Correggio's Magdalen?

In hagiographal literature we find a work of similar tone and charm: *Marie Madeleine*, by P. Lacordaire, an exquisite little book written with tenderness and piety, which deliciously calls up before us the Magdalen of repentance and love, "the loving woman accustomed to the delights of contemplation and needing only to see in her heart him whom in other days she saw under the transparent veil of mortal flesh."

It must be confessed that Correggio was constantly preoccupied with *charm* and with that skilful coquetry that sports with every grace. This is a subtlety of purely personal qualities; but let others beware of a systematic affectation! In this way Correggio did not found a school, but he had imitators, among whom was Parmigiano, who by dint of study and in search for grace — the most natural thing in the world — most often fell into affected and conventional ways.

Jouin, *Chefs-d'œuvre: Peinture, Sculpture, Architecture* (Paris, 1895–7).

## BANQUET OF THE ARQUEBUSIERS

### (*VAN DER HELST*)

### WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

THE *Night-Watch* at Amsterdam is magnificent in parts, but on the side to the spectator's right, smoky and dim. The *Five Masters of the Drapers* is wonderful for depth, strength, brightness, massive power. What words are these to express a picture! to describe a description! I once saw a moon riding in the sky serenely, attended by her sparkling maids of honour, and a little lady said, with an air of great satisfaction, "*I must sketch it.*" Ah, my dear lady, if with an H. B., a Bristol board, and a bit of india-rubber, you can sketch the firmament on high, and the moon in her glory, I make you my compliment! I can't sketch *The Five Drapers* with any ink or pen at present at command — but can look with all my eyes, and be thankful to have seen such a masterpiece.

They say he was a moody, ill-conditioned man, the old tenant of the mill. What does he think of the "Van der Helst" which hangs opposite his *Night-Watch*, and which is one of the great pictures of the world? It is not painted by so great a man as Rembrandt; but there it is — to see it is an event of your life. Having beheld it you have

lived in the year 1648, and celebrated the Treaty of Münster. You have shaken the hands of the Dutch Guardsmen, eaten from their platters, drunk their Rhenish, heard their jokes, as they wagged their jolly beards. The Amsterdam Catalogue discourses thus about it: — a model catalogue: it gives you the prices paid, the signatures of the painters, a succinct description of the work.

"This masterpiece represents a banquet of the Civic Guard, which took place on the 18th of June, 1648, in the great hall of the St. Joris Doele, on the Singel at Amsterdam, to celebrate the conclusion of the Peace at Münster. The thirty-five figures composing the picture are all portraits.

"'The Captain Witse' is placed at the head of the table, and attracts our attention first. He is dressed in black velvet, his breast covered with a cuirass, on his head a broad-brimmed black hat with white plumes. He is comfortably seated on a chair of black oak, with a velvet cushion, and holds in his left hand, supported on his knee, a magnificent drinking-horn, surrounded by a St. George destroying the dragon, and ornamented with olive-leaves. The captain's features express cordiality and good-humour; he is grasping the hand of 'Lieutenant Van Wavern' seated near him in a habit of dark grey, with lace and buttons of gold, lace-collar and wrist-bands, his feet crossed, with boots of yellow leather, with large tops, and gold spurs, on his head a black hat and dark-brown plumes. Behind him, at the centre of the picture, is the standard-bearer, 'Jacob Banning,' in an easy martial attitude, hat in hand, his right hand on his chair, his right leg on his left



THE BANQUET OF THE ARQUEBUSIERS.
*Van der Helst.*

knee. He holds the flag of blue silk, in which the Virgin is embroidered " (such a silk! such a flag! such a piece of painting!), " emblematic of the town of Amsterdam. The banner covers his shoulder, and he looks towards the spectator frankly and complacently.

" The man behind him is probably one of the sergeants. His head is bare. He wears a cuirass, and yellow gloves, grey stockings, and boots with large tops, and knee-caps of cloth. He has a napkin on his knees, and in his hand a piece of ham, a slice of bread and a knife. The old man behind is probably ' William the Drummer.' He has his hat in his right hand, and in his left a gold-footed wineglass, filled with white wine. He wears a red scarf, and a black satin doublet, with little slashes of yellow silk. Behind the drummer, two matchlock-men are seated at the end of the table. One in a large black habit, a napkin on his knee, a *hausse-col* of iron, and a linen scarf and collar. He is eating with his knife. The other holds a long glass of white wine. Four musketeers, with different shaped hats, are behind these, one holding a glass, the three others with their guns on their shoulders. Other guests are placed between the personage who is giving the toast and the standard-bearer. One with his hat off, and his hand uplifted, is talking to another. The second is carving a fowl. A third holds a silver plate; and another, in the background, a silver flagon, from which he fills a cup. The corner behind the captain is filled by two seated personages, one of whom is peeling an orange. Two others are standing, armed with halberts, of whom one holds a plumed hat. Behind him are other three individuals, one of

them holding a pewter pot on which the name 'Poock,' the landlord of the 'Hotel Doele,' is engraved. At the back, a maid-servant is coming in with a pasty, crowned with a turkey. Most of the guests are listening to the captain. From an open window in the distance, the façades of two houses are seen, surmounted by stone figures of sheep."

There, now you know all about it: now you can go home and paint just such another. If you do, do pray remember to paint the hands of the figures as they are here depicted; they are as wonderful portraits as the faces. None of your slim Van Dyck elegancies, which have done duty at the cuffs of so many doublets; but each man with a hand for himself, as with a face for himself. I blushed for the coarseness of one of the chiefs in this great company, that fellow behind "William the Drummer," splendidly attired, sitting full in the face of the public; and holding a pork-bone in his hand. Suppose the *Saturday Review* critic were to come suddenly on this picture? Ah! what a shock it would give that noble nature! Why is that knuckle of pork not painted out? at any rate, why is not a little fringe of lace painted round it? or a cut pink paper? or could n't a smelling-bottle be painted in instead, with a crest and a gold top, or a cambric pocket-handkerchief in lieu of the horrid pig, with a pink coronet in the corner? or suppose you covered the man's hand (which is very coarse and strong), and gave him the decency of a kid glove? But a piece of pork in a naked hand? O nerves and eau de Cologne, hide it, hide it!

In spite of this lamentable coarseness, my noble sergeant, give me thy hand as nature made it! A great, and famous,

and noble handiwork I have seen here. Not the greatest picture in the world — not a work of the highest genius — but a performance so great, various, and admirable, so shrewd of humour, so wise of observation, so honest and complete of expression, that to have seen it has been a delight, and to remember it will be a pleasure for days to come. Well done, Bartholomeus Van der Helst! Brave, meritorious, victorious, happy Bartholomew, to whom it has been given to produce a masterpiece!

. . . Was it a dream? It seems like one. Have we been to Holland? Have we heard the chimes at midnight at Antwerp? Were we really away for a week, or have I been sitting up in the room dozing, before this stale old desk? Here's the desk; yes. But if it has been a dream, how could I have learned to hum that tune out of *Dinorah?* Ah, is it that tune, or myself that I am humming? If it was a dream how comes this yellow NOTICE DES TABLEAUX DU MUSÉE D'AMSTERDAM AVEC FACSIMILE DES MONOGRAMMES before me, and this signature of the gallant

Bartholomeus van der Helst fecit A° 1648.

Yes, indeed, it was a delightful little holiday; it lasted a whole week.

*Roundabout Papers* (London, 1863).

## L'EMBARQUEMENT POUR L'ÎLE DE CYTHÈRE

(*WATTEAU*)

EDMOND AND JULES DE GONCOURT

WATTEAU is the great poet of the Eighteenth Century. A creation, a whole creation of poetry and dreams, emanated from his brain and filled his work with the elegance of a supernatural life. From the fantasies of his brain, from the caprice of his art, from his perfectly original genius, not one but a thousand fairies took their flight. From the enchanted visions of his imagination, the painter has drawn an ideal world, and, superior to his own time, he has created one of those Shakespearian realms, one of those countries of love and light, one of those paradises of gallantry that Polyphile built upon the cloud of dreams for the delicate joy of poetic mortals.

Watteau revived grace. Grace with Watteau is not the antique grace — a rigid and solid charm, the perfection of the marble of a Galatea, the entirely plastic and the material glory of a Venus. Grace with Watteau is grace. It is that nothing that invests a woman with an attraction, a coquetry, a more than physical beauty. It is that subtile quality which seems the smile of a line, the soul of form, the spiritual physiognomy of matter.

All the fascinations of a woman in repose: languor, idleness, abandon, leaning back, reclining at full length,



L'Embarquement pour l'Île de Cythère.

*Watteau.*

nonchalance, the cadences of pose, the pretty air of profiles bending over the scales of love (*gammes d'amour*), the receding curves of the bosom, the serpentine lines and undulations, the suppleness of the female body, the play of slender fingers on the handle of a fan and the indiscretions of high heels beyond the skirts, and the happy fortune of deportment, and the coquetry of actions, and the management of the shoulders, and all that knowledge that was taught to women by the mirrors of the last century, — the mimicry of grace! — lives in Watteau with its blossom and its accent, immortal and fixed in a more vital proof than the bosom of the wife of Diomedes moulded by the ashes of Pompeii. And if this grace is animated by Watteau, if he looses it from repose and immobility, if he renders it active and moving, it seems that it works with a rhythm and that its measured pace is a dance led by some harmony.

How decorative is the form of woman, and her grace! O nature, wherein the painter's poetic fancies wander! O landscape! O stage fit for a desirable life! a helpful land, gallant woods, meadows full of music, groves propitious to the sports of Echo! cradling trees hung with baskets of flowers! desert places far from the jealous world, touched by the magic brush of a Servandoni, refreshed with fountains, peopled with marbles and statues, and Naiads, that spot the trembling shadow of the leaves! jets of water suddenly springing up in the midst of farm-yards! an amiable and radiant countryside! Suns of apotheosis, beautiful lights sleeping on the lawns, penetrating and translucent verdure without one shadow where the palette of Veronese,

the riot of purple, and of blonde tresses may find sleep. Rural delights! murmurous and gorgeous decorations! gardens thick with brier and rose! French landscapes planted with Italian pines! villages gay with weddings and carriages, ceremonies, toilettes, and fêtes stunned with the noise of violins and flutes leading the bridal of Nature and the Opera to a Jesuit fane! Rustic scene on the green curtain, on the flowery slope up which the *Comédie Française* climbs and the *Comédie Italienne* gambols.

Quick! to array the spring in ball costume, Watteau's heavens and earth, quick. *Gelosi!* A bergomask laugh shall be the laughter, animation, and action, and movement of the piece. Look where Folly, capped and belled, runs and wakes gaiety, zephyrs, and noise! Ruffs and caps, belts and daggers, little vests and short mantles, go and come. The band of buffoons comes running, bringing beneath the shady boughs the carnival of human passions and its rainbow-hued garb. Variegated family, clothed with sunlight and brilliant silk! that masks with the night! that patches and paints with the moon! Harlequin, as graceful as a product of the pencil of Parmesan! Pierrot, with his arms at his side, as straight as an I, and the Tartaglias, and the Scapins, and the Cassandras, and the Doctors, and the favourite Mezzetin "the big brown man with the laughing face" always in the foreground with his cap on the back of his head — striped all over like a zebra, proud as a god, and drunk as a Silenus! It is the *Comédie Italienne* that plays the guitar in all these landscapes. . . .

Here is the new Olympus and the new mythology; the Olympus of all the demi-gods forgotten by antiquity

Here is the deification of the ideas of the Eighteenth Century, the soul of Watteau's world and time led to the Pantheon of human passions and fashions. These are the new humours of aging humanity — Languor, Gallantry, and Reverie, which Watteau incarnates as clothed allegories, and which he rests upon the *pulvinar* of a divine nature; these are the moral muses of our age out of which he has created the women, or, we might say, the goddesses of these divine pictures.

Love is the light of this world, it penetrates and fills it. It is the youth and serenity of it; and amidst rivers and mountains, promenades and gardens, lakes and fountains, the Paradise of Watteau unfolds; it is Cythera. Under a sky painted with the colours of summer, the galley of Cleopatra swings at the bank. The waves are stilled. The woods are hushed. From the grass to the firmament, beating the motionless air with their butterfly wings, a host of Cupids fly, fly, play and dance, here tying careless couples with roses, and tying above a circlet of kisses that has risen from earth to the sky. Here is the temple, here is the end of this world: the painter's *L'Amour paisible*, Love disarmed, seated in the shadows, which the poet of Theos wished to engrave upon a sweet cup of spring; a smiling Arcadia; a Decameron of sentiment; a tender meditation; attentions with vague glances; words that lull the soul; a platonic gallantry, a leisure occupied by the heart, an idleness of youthful company; a court of amorous thoughts; the emotional and playful courtesy of the young newly married leaning upon the offered arm; eyes without fever, desire without appetite, voluptuousness without de-

sire, audacious gestures regulated like the ballet for a spectacle, and tranquil defences disdainful of haste through their security; the romance of the body and the mind, soothed, pacified, resuscitated, happy; an idleness of passion at which the stone satyrs lurking in the green *coulisses* laugh with their goat-laughter. Adieu to the bacchanales led by Gillot, that last pagan of the Renaissance, born of the libations of the Pleiad to the rustic gods of Arcueil! Adieu to the Olympus of the *Io Pæan*, the hoarse pipe and the goat-footed Gods, the laughter of the *Cyclops* of Euripides and the *Evohe* of Ronsard, the licentious triumphs, the ivy-crowned Joys;

*" Et la libre cadence*
*De leur danse."*

These gods have gone, and Rubens, who lives again in that palette of light and rosy flesh, wanders bewildered in these *fêtes*, where the riot of the senses is stilled, — animated caprices which seem to await the crack of a whip to dissolve and disappear in the realm of fancy like a mid-summer night's dream! It is Cythera; but it is Watteau's. It is love, but it is a poetic love, a love that dreams and thinks; modern love, with its aspirations and its crown of melancholy.

Yes, at the heart of this work of Watteau's, I do not know what slow and vague harmony murmurs behind those laughing words; I do not know what musical and sweetly contagious sorrow is diffused throughout these gallant *fêtes*. Like the fascination of Venice, I do not know what veiled and sighing poetry in low tones holds here the charmed spirit. The man has passed across his work; and this

work you come to regard as the play and distraction of a suffering thought, like the playthings of a sick child who is now dead. . . .

But let us speak of that masterpiece of French masterpieces, that canvas which has held a distinguished place on one of the walls of the *salon carré* for fifty years, *L'Embarquement de Cythère*.

Observe all that ground lightly coated with a transparent and golden varnish, all that ground covered with rapid strokes of the brush lightly laid on with a delicate touch. Notice that green of the trees shot through with red tones, penetrated with quivering air, and the vaporous light of autumn. Notice the delicate water-colour effect of thick oil, the general smoothness of the canvas, the relief of this pouch or hood; notice the full modelling of the little faces with their glances in the confused outlines of the eye and their smiles in the suggested outlines of the mouth. The beautiful and flowing sweep of the brush over those *décolletages*, the bare flesh glowing with voluptuous rose among the shadows of the wood! The pretty crossings of the brush to round a neck! The beautiful undulating folds with soft breaks like those which the modeller makes in the clay! And the spirit and the gallantry of touch of Watteau's brush in the feminine trifles and headdresses and finger-tips, — and everything it approaches! And the harmony of those sunlit distances, those mountains of rosy snow, those waters of verdurous reflections; and again those rays of sunlight falling upon robes of rose and yellow, mauve petticoats, blue mantles, shot-coloured vests, and little white dogs with fiery spots. For no painter has equalled Watteau

in rendering beautifully coloured objects transfigured by a ray of sunlight, their soft fading and that kind of diffused blossoming of their brilliancy under the full light. Let your eyes rest for a moment on that band of pilgrims of both sexes hurrying, beneath the setting sun, towards the galley of Love that is about to set sail : there is the joyousness of the most adorable colours in the world surprised in a ray of the sun, and all that haze and tender silk in the radiant shower involuntarily remind you of those brilliant insects that we find dead, but with still living colours, in the golden glow of a piece of amber.

This picture, the *Embarquement de Cythère*, is the wonder of wonders of this master.

*L'Art du Dix-huitième Siècle* (3d ed., Paris, 1880).

## THE SISTINE MADONNA

### (*RAPHAEL*)

F. A. GRUYER

RAPHAEL seemed to have attained perfection in the *Virgin with the Fish;* however, four or five years later, he was to rise infinitely higher and display something superior to art and inaccessible to science.

It was in 1518 that the Benedictines of the monastery of St. Sixtus ordered this picture. They had required that the Virgin and the Infant Jesus should be in the company of St. Sixtus and St. Barbara. This is how Raphael entered into their views.

Deep shadows were veiling from us the majesty of the skies. Suddenly light succeeds the obscurity, and the Infant Jesus and Mary appear surrounded by a brightness so intense that the eyes can scarcely bear it. Between two green curtains drawn to either side of the picture, amid an aureole of innumerable cherubin, the Virgin is seen standing upon the clouds, with her son in her arms, showing him to the world as its Redeemer and Sovereign Judge. Lower down, St. Sixtus and St. Barbara are kneeling on the clouds on either side. Nothing is visible of the earth, but it is divined by the gestures and glances of the two saints, who are pointing to the multitude for whom they are imploring the divine mercy. Two angels are leaning on a

kind of balustrade whose horizontal line forms a solid plane at the base of the composition. Nothing could be more elementary than the idea of such a picture; the ancient symmetry and the most rigid parallelism are scrupulously observed. Raphael becomes almost archaic, and, while returning to the simplicity of primitive traditions, by the force of genius he confounds the scientific exaggeration that is already so close to decadence. Doubtless he had raised his eyes high every time he had taken antiquity as a model, but he raised them much higher still by becoming exclusively Christian again, and by comprehending that the humblest way is not only the surest, but also the most sublime. Why is such simple means so highly successful in exalting our feelings? Why is it, when looking at this picture, we have moments of divine oblivion in which we fancy ourselves in Heaven? That is what we must try to penetrate and comprehend.

The principal figure of the picture is the Infant Jesus. He is no longer the graceful *Bambino* that we have so often seen in the arms of Raphael's Madonnas, gentle and encouraging to the eyes of mankind, or again he who, erewhile, in the *Virgin with the Fish*, leaned towards the young Tobit; it is the God himself, it is the God of Justice and of the Last Day. In the most humble state of our flesh, beneath the veil of infancy, we see the terrifying splendour of infinite majesty in this picture. The divine Infant leaves between himself and us a place for fear, and in his presence we experience something of the fear of God that Adam felt and that he transmitted to his race. For attaining such heights of impression the means



THE SISTINE MADONNA.
*Raphael.*

employed by Raphael are of an incomprehensible simplicity. The Infant Jesus nestles familiarly in his mother's arms. Sitting on a fold of the white veil that the Virgin supports with her left hand, he leans against the Madonna's right arm; his legs are crossed one above the other; the whole of the left arm follows the bend of the body and the left hand rests upon the right leg; at the same time, the right shoulder being raised by Mary's hand, the right arm is bent at the elbow and the hand grasps the Virgin's veil. This attitude, so natural, so true, so unstudied, expresses grandeur and sovereignty. Nothing can be more elementary nor more powerful. The light rests calmly upon every part of this beautiful body and all its members in such fine repose. Humanity was never seen under such radiance. The Son of God, in transporting to Heaven the terrestrial form of his infancy, has made it divine for all eternity. Raphael doubtless owed to antiquity something of the power that enabled him spontaneously to create such a masterpiece; but in this case he has far surpassed his models, and we should search vainly in antique art for a more ideal and grand figure than that of this marvellous infant. However, hitherto we have only examined the body, what shall we say about the head to give a true idea of it? In fact, that is perhaps the most extraordinary and most indescribable part of the whole picture. The Infant Jesus seems to recoil from the spectacle of human shame; he lovingly presses against the Virgin's breast, softly rests his forehead against his Mother's cheek, and darts towards the world one of those flaming and terrible glances at which, it is said, everything in heaven, on earth, and in hell trembles. His

disordered hair stands upright and quivers as in the breath of the tempest, and sombre clouds pass across the widely modelled forehead; the brows are frowning, the pupils dilate and the flame is ready to dart forth; the eyes, profound and terrible, are preparing to flash with lightning; they still withhold it, but we feel that it may break forth, and we tremble. This glance is truly splendid; it fascinates you, attracts you, and, at the same time, fills you with terror. The lips are quivering, and, from the point of view of line, that is the great mystery, I think; the upper lip, visibly lifted on the left side, assumes a strange accent of anger and indignation. This deviation of a single feature is materially a small matter, and yet it suffices to stamp the whole countenance with irresistible action. The Infant Jesus assumes a formidable aspect; we recognize in him the Sovereign Judge; his power is infinite and one act of his will be sufficient to condemn or absolve. The *Virgin of the Chair* had given us a presentiment of this image in 1516; the *Virgin of St. Sixtus* shows it to us in 1518, in its eternal grandeur and sublime reality. But the Word of God would scarcely leave room for anything but fear, if the Virgin did not immediately come to shed hope in the soul terrified at the idea of justice.

In fact, the Virgin remains calm and serene beside her enraged son, and reassures our heart also with her confidence. If she presents the Son of God to the world under a terrifying aspect, at the same time she presses him so tenderly against her breast, and her features, under the splendour of the divine radiance, shine with such purity that we feel the flame that purifies all passing within ourselves.

The Virgin appears here like the dawning light. She advances from right to left, beautiful as the skies, light as the cloud that bears her. Her gait, or rather her flight through the air, is stamped with royal nobleness and dignity. Her right hand, raised as high as the shoulder, holds the body of Jesus under his right arm, and the Saviour lies back against his Mother's right arm, while Mary's left arm is placed under the Infant's body to support and carry him. The Virgin of St. Sixtus, like every Madonna, wears a red robe and a white mantle; and Art has never done greater things with drapery with such simple elements. The mantle falls with a beautiful movement over the lower part of the body and floats in wide folds, which, while sharply defining the form and movement of the lower limbs, reveals the bare feet which are of admirable form and colour. The robe, ornamented only with a little gold embroidery on the sleeve, is of a purple tint in the shadows and becomes rose in the light; it is girdled below the breast like the antique statues, and reveals the neck as well as the top of the shoulders, which are surrounded by a veil of white gauze. A long scarf of the same colour as the veil, but tinted with bistre, is placed on the crown of the head, and, distending like a sail above the left shoulder, returns to the left hand to serve as a support for the Infant, and runs along the body of Jesus, who grasps it with his right hand. The Virgin's head appears in full illumination without any artifice and glows solely with its own beauty. It is three quarters left, indeed almost full face, in a similar position but in opposition to the Saviour's head, which, as we have seen, is three quarters right and almost full face also. The hair, a light

chestnut, is arranged simply in smooth and flat bands lightly waved above the brow, leaving the ears, cheeks, and temples completely uncovered, and not interfering in any way with the outlines of the face. The forehead, of a medium height, presents a widely developed surface, in the centre of which glows a light that is continued down the bridge of the nose. The eyes, of irreproachable shape, are full of brilliance, and their gaze sheds over all it illumines an infinite softness mingled with an indefinable exaltation. The mouth trembles with divine emotion and seems to quiver with celestial bliss.

Another remarkable thing in this supreme manifestation of genius is that in the Virgin and the Infant, of such different, we might almost say such opposite expressions, the same features are noticeably repeated. Raphael has been faithful to the last to the system he adopted in almost his earliest pictures, and to make this intentional resemblance more noticeable here he has placed the two heads close together, and shown them almost full face, so that there shall be no distracting element; and has opposed them to each other by turning them in different ways so that they may complement each other and be reflected in one another as in a mirror. Therefore, as the same glory surrounds both Mother and Son at the same time, so the same character of beauty is found faithfully reproduced in each. The skulls of both have the same general conformation, the same intelligence shines upon the two brows, although the Saviour's is dark and menacing whilst the Virgin's remains radiant and clear; the eyes have also the same shape and are full of the same fire, though the

glance of the one is terrible and of the other, reassuring; the mouth has the same lines, the same nobility, and the same quiver that has the power of alternately inspiring terror and tranquillity; and the cleft in the chin is identical. The colour also helps to make an almost perfect unity of these two figures — we have the same white and solid flesh tints, strong and delicate; the same warm and always luminous shadows. Indeed, Jesus is confounded with Mary, so to speak, so that the two forms together make one and the same body, and, moreover, the Saviour at need may get rid of his majestic nakedness beneath the veil and in the mantle of Mary.

This Virgin, in which Raphael has surpassed himself, was painted in a moment of veritable exaltation of genius. It was not laboriously conceived; it was born of itself, spontaneously complete, like the antique Minerva, with its perfect form and beauty, and it was the recompense for an entire life consecrated without intermission to the search after nature and truth, to the study of the masters and all the traditions, to the cult of the ideal and especially of the Virgin.

After having produced so many rare masterpieces, his love and faith were carried to such a pitch of power and enthusiasm that he seemed to be borne up by them, and, suddenly penetrating into a sphere superior to all he had hitherto visited, he painted a Virgin incomparably more beautiful than all the admirable Virgins he had painted before. Not a single design, nor preparatory study, puts us on the trace of any bringing forth of any of the parts of this picture.

However, if the image of this Virgin was traced on the canvas by a hand suddenly inspired, I think that at the same time Raphael confronted his inspiration with nature, and that, whilst resolutely springing towards the infinite, he yet set himself face to face with reality. Perhaps, strictly, he would have had no need of that; he had amassed so much, his memory placed such numerous, varied, and exact documents at the service of his will, that he had only to remember in order almost immediately to produce an accomplished whole. Moreover, he had the model he wanted, possessing without dominating it; and without losing sight of his ideal, it was to this model that he applied himself for the embodiment of his idea. Thus, in the Virgin of St. Sixtus, we recognize, not the image of La Fornarina, but the transfiguration of her image. None of her features are left and yet it is she, but so purified that no trouble nor shadow comes to dim the radiant and virginal brightness of the picture. In every human creature there is a divine germ that cannot flourish on earth and whose blossoming is only in the skies; this is the flowering, the splendour of which is shown in the Virgin of St. Sixtus. We care very little about Raphael's private life; we only affirm in the presence of his work that as a painter he did not love for this life only, and that from the beginning to the end of his career he had the respect and the taste for eternal love. Since the day when the Virgin appeared transfigured to the seer of the Apocalypse, she had never revealed herself in such effulgence. Before this picture, we lose every memory of earth and see nothing but the Queen of Heaven and of the angels, the

creature elect and blessed above all creatures. In thus painting the Virgin, Raphael has almost reached the confines of divinity.

But everything in this picture is food for admiration, even the atmosphere that envelops it and those innumerable and endless legions of cherubin that gravitate around the Virgin and the Word of God. The aureole that encircles the divine group shows nothing at first but dazzling and golden light; then, as it recedes from the centre, this light gradually pales and insensibly merges from the most intense gold into the purest blue, and is filled with those heads, chaste, innocent, and fervent, that spring beneath the brush of Raphael like the flowers at the breath of Spring. These aërial creatures throng to contemplate the Virgin, and their forms recall those radiances in the shape of crowns that fill the Dantesque Paradise, making the name of Mary resound with their praises. Our eyes and mind lose themselves in the immense multitude of these happy spirits. "Number if you can the sands of the sea or the stars in the sky, those that are visible and invisible, and still believe that you have not attained the number of the angels. It costs God nothing to multiply the most excellent things, and it is the most beautiful of which he is most prodigal." We cannot keep our eyes away from that sky; we gaze at it and love to dazzle and weary our eyes with it.

On either side of the Virgin, kneel St. Sixtus and St. Barbara. Placed also amid the clouds, but below the Madonna, they are near the sovereign mediatrix, as mediators also between the world and the Sovereign

Judge. St. Sixtus is seen on the right in profile, his head is raised towards the Infant Jesus, his left hand is placed devoutly on his breast while his right is foreshortened and points towards the spectator. He wears a white rochet tied by a girdle with golden tassels, a white amice around his neck, a magnificent pallium woven with gold falling to his feet, and a long chasuble embroidered with gold and lined with red enveloping his shoulders and arms, the wide folds of which are lost amid the clouds. His head is bare, and his white tiara, adorned with the triple crown, is placed on the balustrade that runs horizontally across the base of the picture. It is impossible to find a representation of pontifical sovereignty of greater fervour, grandeur, and truth. His cranium is bald and has only a crown of grey hair remaining. His emaciated face is full of ardour and power: his eyes penetrate straight into the splendour of God; and his mouth, although partially hidden by the grey beard that covers the lower part of his face, is praying with extraordinary fervour. His gesture, so resolute and respectful, is in itself an act of love and charity, and his very hands, so true in drawing and so bold in action, have their special eloquence. It seems impossible that the divine justice will not allow itself to be swayed by such intercession.

St. Barbara is opposite St. Sixtus. Her body is in left profile, towards the Virgin, while her head, turned over her left shoulder towards the spectator, appears almost in full face. Only her left arm and hand are visible, pressed against her breast. Her left knee, directly resting upon the cloud, sustains the weight of her body; her right leg, which

is raised, only touches the clouds with the foot. Her head is as beautiful, youthful, and fresh as the action of her whole figure is easy, elegant, and noble. Then where did Raphael find this serenity if not in himself? The saint, gently bending towards the earth, seems to want to receive our hopes and vows to bear them to Heaven. She is one of those virgins who are created in the image of the Virgin par excellence. Nevertheless, here she affects certain worldly appearances which, beside the severe simplicity of the Mother of the Word, establish a hierarchy between the two figures and a sort of line of demarcation that cannot be crossed. The higher we soar the more is grandeur simplified in everything.

St. Barbara's hair is arranged with a certain elegance; it is very abundant, of an ash blonde, and forms thick waving bands that are gathered off the temples and are crossed by two white fillets, one of which crosses the top of the forehead like a diadem. Her eyes, lowered towards the earth, are perfectly beautiful; her mouth is calm and sweet; and purity shines in all her features. Her shoulders are bare, only covered with a veil of white gauze which falls down her back, passes under her arm and returns to her breast where her left hand holds it. Her robe of violet shading into a neutral tint, is only visible where it covers her leg; for a green mantle, thrown over it, envelops the body, only revealing the arm, the sleeve of which is blue on the upper arm, yellow, and slightly puffed at the shoulder, and yellow also on the forearm. All this is of a grand air and in exquisite taste. Thus draped, the figure has a charming effect which, without detracting from the religious idea, leaves room also for a more human sentiment.

Raphael, doubtless, had thought that the figures of the Virgin, the Infant Jesus, St. Sixtus, and St. Barbara would alone be sufficient for his picture; but the empty space remaining beneath the feet of the Madonna was too considerable to be filled up simply by clouds: and therefore he added that rigid and horizontal supporting bar on which two angels lean upon their elbows, contemplating the glory of the Virgin with such rapture. In fact, these angels seem to be painted as an afterthought, for, laid in with a light brush, they scarcely cover the clouds, but allow the underlying pigment to show through.

Little wings of vivid tint complete these aërial creatures, always living around Raphael and always ready to come from his brush. Although held to nature by the most intimate ties, although perhaps too familiar in attitude and manner, they are yet supernatural by the clearness of their intelligence and by the power of their admiration. We are enchanted with their candour and beauty. They are full of zeal and enthusiasm; they possess the grace of the Pagan Loves merged into Christian innocence and chastity. Their faith is as beautiful as the sky, and in loving them it is almost for God himself that we feel the love.

Such are the various parts of this work; their union forms the most sublime harmony, and each in particular brings a divine note to this celestial concert. By what process was this picture produced? We can scarcely say, so greatly does the inspiration predominate over the technique.

Raphael aimed at the sublime; and the rest was given to him as increase. The colour is just what it should be in

such a subject; whilst keeping to a sweet, calm, and peaceful scale, it is resplendent with light, and we ask ourselves whether it is not the hand of an angel rather than that of a man that has been able to realize such a marvel.

The *Virgin of St. Sixtus* is the most beautiful picture in the world. To copy this Virgin is to attempt the impossible. Study it a hundred times and a hundred times it will reveal itself under a new aspect. It was before this picture, it is said, that Correggio cried: "And I also, I am a painter."

The *Virgin of St. Sixtus* was immediately placed where it was meant to be; it was present in triumph every day for two hundred and thirty-six years at the divine sacrament; and never was a human work so worthy of that signal honour.

In 1734 the degenerate monks of St. Sixtus preferred a little gold to their inestimable masterpiece, and for a miserable sum of a hundred and some thousands of francs (110,000 to 120,000), they sold their Virgin to Augustus III., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. That day the barbarians were not those the Italians think. . . .

At Dresden, the Madonna was received with great pomp. Augustus III. had it brought in haste into the reception hall of his palace; as the place of honour was occupied by the throne, he, himself, seized the royal chair, and relegating it to a less conspicuous station, he cried: "Room for the great Raphael." If this is historic, it does honour to the prince; if legendary, it is to the glory of the people whose sentiment it translates.

*Les Vierges de Raphaël* (Paris, 1869).

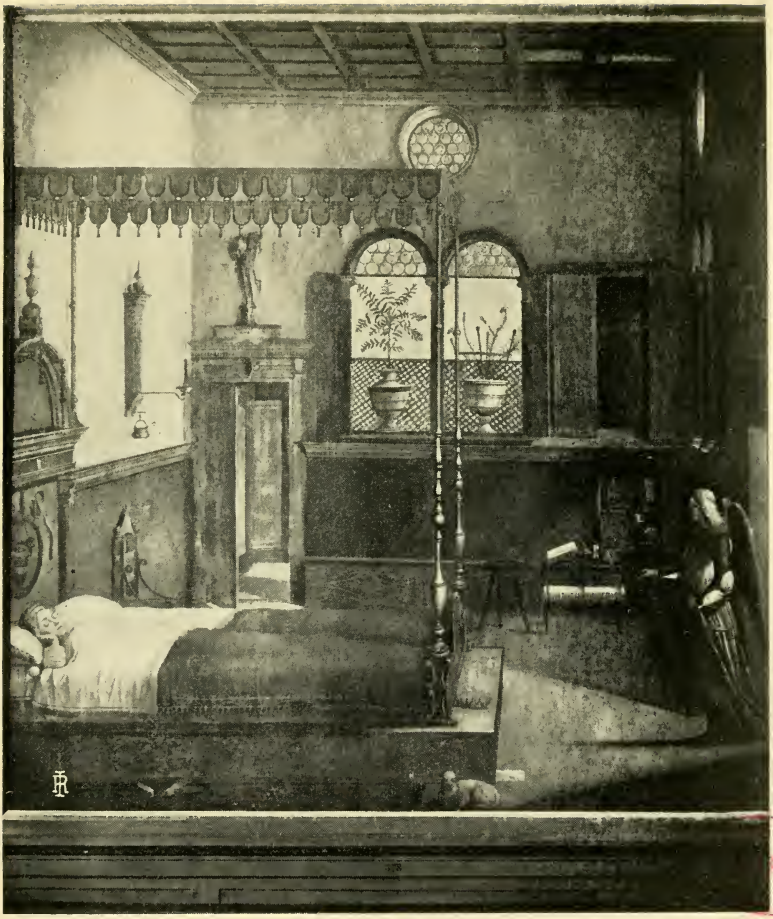
## THE DREAM OF ST. URSULA

### (*CARPACCIO*)

JOHN RUSKIN

IN the year 1869, just before leaving Venice I had been carefully looking at a picture by Victor Carpaccio, representing the dream of a young princess. Carpaccio has taken much pains to explain to us, as far as he can, the kind of life she leads, by completely painting her little bedroom in the light of dawn, so that you can see everything in it. It is lighted by two doubly-arched windows, the arches being painted crimson round their edges, and the capitals of the shafts that bear them, gilded. They are filled at the top with small round panes of glass; but beneath, are open to the blue morning sky, with a low lattice across them; and in the one at the back of the room are set two beautiful white Greek vases with a plant in each; one having rich dark and pointed green leaves, the other crimson flowers, but not of any species known to me, each at the end of a branch like a spray of heath.

These flower-pots stand on a shelf which runs all round the room, and beneath the window, at about the height of the elbow, and serves to put things on anywhere: beneath it, down to the floor, the walls are covered with green cloth; but above are bare and white. The second window is nearly opposite the bed, and in front of it is the princess's



The Dream of St. Ursula.
*Carpaccio.*

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reading-table, some two feet and a half square, covered by a red cloth with a white border and dainty fringe; and beside it her seat, not at all like a reading chair in Oxford, but a very small three-legged stool like a music stool, covered with crimson cloth. On the table are a book, set up at a slope fittest for reading, and an hour-glass. Under the shelf near the table so as to be easily reached by the outstretched arm, is a press full of books. The door of this has been left open, and the books, I am grieved to say, are rather in disorder, having been pulled about before the princess went to bed, and one left standing on its side.

Opposite this window, on the white wall, is a small shrine or picture (I can't see which, for it is in sharp retiring perspective), with a lamp before it, and a silver vessel hung from the lamp, looking like one for holding incense.

The bed is a broad four-poster, the posts being beautifully wrought golden or gilded rods, variously wreathed and branched, carrying a canopy of warm red. The princess's shield is at the head of it, and the feet are raised entirely above the floor of the room, on a dais which projects at the lower end so as to form a seat, on which the child has laid her crown. Her little blue slippers lie at the side of the bed, — her white dog beside them, the coverlid is scarlet, the white sheet folded half way back over it; the young girl lies straight, bending neither at waist nor knee, the sheet rising and falling over her in a narrow unbroken wave, like the shape of the coverlid of the last sleep, when the turf scarcely rises. She is some seventeen or eighteen years old, her head is turned towards us on the

pillow, the cheek resting on her hand, as if she were thinking, yet utterly calm in sleep, and almost colourless. Her hair is tied with a narrow riband, and divided into two wreaths, which encircle her head like a double crown. The white nightgown hides the arm raised on the pillow, down to the wrist.

At the door of the room an angel enters; (the little dog, though lying awake, vigilant, takes no notice.) He is a very small angel, his head just rises a little above the shelf round the room, and would only reach as high as the princess's chin, if she were standing up. He has soft grey wings, lustreless; and his dress, of subdued blue, has violet sleeves, open above the elbow, and showing white sleeves below. He comes in without haste, his body, like a mortal one, casting shadow from the light through the door behind, his face perfectly quiet; a palm-branch in his right hand — a scroll in his left.

So dreams the princess, with blessed eyes, that need no earthly dawn. It is very pretty of Carpaccio to make her dream out the angel's dress so particularly, and notice the slashed sleeves; and to dream so little an angel — very nearly a doll angel, — bringing her the branch of palm, and message. But the lovely characteristic of all is the evident delight of her continual life. Royal power over herself, and happiness in her flowers, her books, her sleeping and waking, her prayers, her dreams, her earth, her heaven. . . .

"How do I know the princess is industrious?"

Partly by the trim state of her room, — by the hour-glass on the table, — by the evident use of all the books

she has, (well bound, every one of them, in stoutest leather or velvet, and with no dog's-ears,) but more distinctly from another picture of her, not asleep. In that one a prince of England has sent to ask her in marriage: and her father, little liking to part with her, sends for her to his room to ask her what she would do. He sits, moody and sorrowful; she, standing before him in a plain housewifely dress, talks quietly, going on with her needlework all the time.

A work-woman, friends, she, no less than a princess; and princess most in being so. In like manner, is a picture by a Florentine, whose mind I would fain have you know somewhat, as well as Carpaccio's — Sandro Botticelli — the girl who is to be the wife of Moses, when he first sees her at the desert well, has fruit in her left hand, but a distaff in her right.[1]

"To do good work, whether you live or die," it is the entrance to all Princedoms; and if not done, the day will come, and that infallibly, when you must labour for evil instead of good.

*Fors Clavigera* (Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent, 1872).

1 More accurately a rod cloven into three at the top, and so holding the wool. The fruit is a bunch of apples; she has golden sandals, and a wreath of myrtle round her hair.

## THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

### (*RUBENS*)

### EUGÈNE FROMENTIN

MANY people say *Antwerp;* but many also say *the country of Rubens*, and this mode of speech more exactly expresses all the things that constitute the magic of the place: a great city, a great personal destiny, a famous school, and ultra-celebrated pictures. All this is imposing, and our imagination becomes excited rather more than usual when, in the centre of the *Place Vert*, we see the statue of Rubens and, farther on, the old basilica where are preserved the triptychs which, humanly speaking, have consecrated it.

The statue is not a masterpiece; but it is he, in his own home. Under the form of a man, who was nothing but a painter, with the sole attributes of a painter, in perfect truth it personifies the sole Flemish sovereignty which has neither been contested nor menaced, and which certainly never will be.

At the end of the square is seen Notre Dame; it presents itself in profile, being outlined by one of its lateral faces, the darkest one, on account of the rains beating on that side. It is made to look blacker and bigger by being surrounded with light and low buildings. With its carved stonework, its rusty tone, its blue and lustrous roof, its



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THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS.

*Rubens.*

colossal tower where the golden disk and the golden needles of its dial glitter in the stone discoloured by the vapours from the Scheldt and by the winters, it assume monstrous proportions. When the sky is troubled, as it is to-day, it adds all its own strange caprices to the grandeur of the lines. Imagine then the invention of a Gothic Piranesi, exaggerated by the fancy of the North, wildly illuminated by a stormy day, and standing out in irregular blotches against the scenic background of a sky entirely black or entirely white, and full of tempest. A more original or more striking preliminary stage-setting could not be contrived. Thus it is vain for you to have come from Mechlin or Brussels, to have seen the *Magi* and the *Calvary*, to have formed an exact and measured idea of Rubens, or even to have taken familiarities in examining him that have set you at your ease with him, for you cannot enter Notre Dame as you enter a museum.

It is three o'clock; the clock high up has just struck. Scarcely even a sacristan makes a sound in the tranquil, clean and clear naves, as Pieter Neefs has represented them, with an inimitable feeling for their solitude and grandeur. It is raining and the light is fading. Shadows and gleams succeed each other upon the two triptychs in their thin framing of brown wood fastened without any pomp to the cold and smooth walls of the transepts, and this proud painting only stands out the more amid the violent lights and obscurities contending around it. German copyists have placed their easels before the *Descent from the Cross;* there is nobody before the *Elevation to the Cross.* This simple fact expresses the world's opinion as to these two works.

They are greatly admired, almost unreservedly so, and the fact is rare in the case of Rubens, but the admiration is divided. The chief renown has fallen upon the *Descent from the Cross*. The *Elevation to the Cross* has the gift of touching still more the impassioned, or more deeply convinced, friends of Rubens. No two works, in fact, could resemble each other less than these that were conceived at an interval of two years, that were inspired by the same effort of mind, and that, nevertheless, so plainly bear the marks of two separate tendencies. The date of the *Descent from the Cross* is 1612; that of the *Elevation to the Cross* is 1610. I insist upon the date, for it is important. Rubens was returning to Antwerp, and it was on his disembarkation, so to speak, that he painted them. His education was finished. At that moment he had even an excess of studies that were somewhat heavy for him and of which he was going to make free use once for all and then get rid of almost immediately. Of all the Italian masters he had consulted, each one, be it understood, gave him advice of a sufficiently exclusive nature. The hot-headed masters authorized him to dare greatly; the severe masters recommended him to keep himself under strong restraint.

His nature, character, and native faculties all tended to a division. The task itself exacted that he should make two parts of his beautiful gifts. He felt the expediency of this, took advantage of it, treated of the subjects in accordance with their spirit, and gave two contrary and two just ideas of himself: on the one hand the most magnificent example we possess of his wisdom, and on the other one of the most astonishing visions of his fire and ardour. To the personal

inspiration of the painter add a very marked Italian influence and you will still better be able to explain to yourself the extraordinary value that posterity attaches to pages which may be regarded as his diploma works and which were the first public acts of his life as the head of a school.

I will tell you how this influence manifests itself and by what characteristics it may be recognized. But first it is enough for me to remark that it exists, in order that the physiognomy of the talent of Rubens may not lose any of its features at the moment when we examine it. This is not that he should be positively cramped in canonical formulæ in which others would find themselves imprisoned.

On the other hand, with what ease he moves among these formulæ, with what freedom he makes use of them, with what tact he disguises or confesses them, according as he takes pleasure in revealing the well-informed man or the novice. However, whatever he may do, we feel the *Romanist* who has just spent some years on classic ground, who has just arrived and has not yet changed his atmosphere. There is some unknown quality remaining with him that reveals travel, such as a foreign odour about his clothes. It is certainly to this fine Italian scent that the *Descent from the Cross* owes the extreme favour that it enjoys. For those indeed who would like Rubens to be somewhat as he is, but very much also as they imagine him, there is here a seriousness in youth, a frank and studious flower of maturity which is about to disappear and which is unique.

I need not describe the composition. You could not

mention a more popular composition as a work of art or as an example of religious style. There is nobody who has not in his mind the ordering and the effect of the picture, its great central light cast against a dark background, its grandiose masses, its distinct and massive divisions. We know that Rubens got the first idea of it from Italy, and that he made no attempt to conceal the loan. The scene is powerful and grave. It acts on one from afar, it stands out strikingly upon a wall: it is serious and enforces seriousness. When we remember the carnage with which the work of Rubens is crimsoned, the massacres, the executioners torturing, martyring, and making their victims howl, we recognize that here we have a noble *execution*. Everything in it is restrained, concise, and laconic, as in a page of Holy Writ.

There are neither gesticulations, cries, horrors, nor too many tears. The Virgin hardly breaks into a single sob, and the intense suffering of the drama is expressed by scarce a gesture of inconsolable motherhood, a tearful face, or red eyes. The Christ is one of the most elegant figures that Rubens ever imagined for the painting of a God. It possesses some peculiar extended, pliant, and almost tapering grace, that gives it every natural delicacy and all the distinction of a beautiful academic study. It is subtly proportioned and in perfect taste: the drawing does not fall far short of the sentiment.

You have not forgotten the effect of that large and slightly hip-shot body, with its small, thin, and fine head slightly fallen to one side, so livid and so perfectly limpid in its pallor, neither shrivelled nor drawn, and from which

all suffering has disappeared, as it descends with so much beatitude to rest for a moment among the strange beauties of the death of the just! Recollect how heavily it hangs and how precious it is to support, in what a lifeless attitude it glides along the sudarium, with what agonized affection it is received by the outstretched hands and arms of the women. Is there anything more touching? One of his feet, livid and pierced, encounters at the foot of the Cross the bare shoulder of Magdalen. It does not rest upon it, but grazes it. The contact is scarcely noticeable, we divine it rather than see it. It would have been profane to insist upon it, it would have been cruel not to have made us believe in it. All Rubens's furtive sensitiveness is in this imperceptible contact that says so many things, respects them all, and makes them affecting.

The sinner is admirable. She is incontestably the best piece of work in the picture, the most delicate, the most personal, one of the best figures of women, moreover, that Rubens ever executed in his career that was so fertile in feminine creations. This delicious figure has its legend; how should it not have, its very perfection having become legendary! It is probable that this beautiful maiden with the black eyes, with the firm glance, with the clear-cut profile, is a portrait, and the portrait is that of Isabella Brandt, whom he had married two years before, and who had also sat for him for the Virgin in the wing of the *Visitation*. However, while observing her ample figure, powdered hair, and plump proportions, we reflect what must some day be the splendid and individual charms of that beautiful Helen Fourment whom he is to marry twenty years later.

From his earliest to his latest years, one tenacious type seems to have taken up its abode in Rubens's heart; one fixed idea haunted his amorous and constant imagination. He delights in it, he completes it, he achieves it; to some extent he pursues it in his two marriages, just as he never ceases to repeat it throughout his works. There is always something both of Isabella and of Helen in the women whom Rubens painted from either one of them. In the first he puts a sort of preconceived trait of the second; into the second glides a kind of ineffaceable memory of the first. At the date of which we treat, he possesses the first and is inspired by her; the other is not yet born, and still he divines her. The future already mingles with the present; the real with the ideal. As soon as the image appears it has this double form. Not only is it exquisite, but not a feature is wanting. Does it not seem as if in thus fixing it from the first day, Rubens intended that neither he nor anyone else should forget it?

As for the rest, this is the sole mundane grace with which he has embellished this austere picture, slightly monkish, and absolutely evangelical in character, if by that is meant the gravity of sentiment and style, and if we remember the rigours that such a spirit must impose upon itself. In that case, you will understand, a great part of his reserve is as much the result of his Italian education as of the attention he gave to his subject.

The canvas is sombre, notwithstanding its high lights and the extraordinary whiteness of the winding-sheet. In spite of its reliefs, the painting is *flat*. It is a picture of blackish grounds on which are disposed broad strong lights of no

gradations. The colouring is not very rich : it is full, well-sustained, and clearly calculated to be effective from a distance. It makes the picture, frames it, expresses its weakness and its strength, and makes no attempt to beautify it. It is composed of an almost black green, an absolute black, a rather heavy red, and a white. These four tones are placed side by side as frankly as is possible with four notes of such violence. The contact is brusque and yet they do not suffer. In the great white, the corpse of Christ is drawn with a delicate and supple line and modelled by its own reliefs without any effort of *nuances*, thanks to deviations of imperceptible values. No shining, no single division in the lights, and scarcely a detail in the dark parts. All that is of a singular breadth and rigidity. The outlines are narrow, the half-tints limited except in the Christ, where the under layer of ultramarine has worn through and to-day forms blemishes. The pigment is smooth, compact, flowing easily and thoughtfully.

At the distance from which we examine it, the work of the hand disappears, but it is easy to guess that it is excellent and directed with full confidence by a mind broken into good habits, that conforms to them, applies itself, and wishes to do well. Rubens remembers, observes, restrains himself, possesses all his forces, subordinates them, and only half makes use of them.

In spite of these drawbacks, this is a singularly original, attractive, and strong work. Van Dyck will derive his best religious inspirations from it. Philippe de Champagne will not imitate it, I am afraid, except in its weak points, and from it will compose his French style. Otto Van Veen

should certainly applaud it. What should Van Oort think of it? As for Jordaens, he is waiting for his fellow student to become more distinctly and expressly Rubens before following him in these new ways.

*Les Maîtres d'Autrefois* (Paris, 1876).

## BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

### (*TITIAN*)

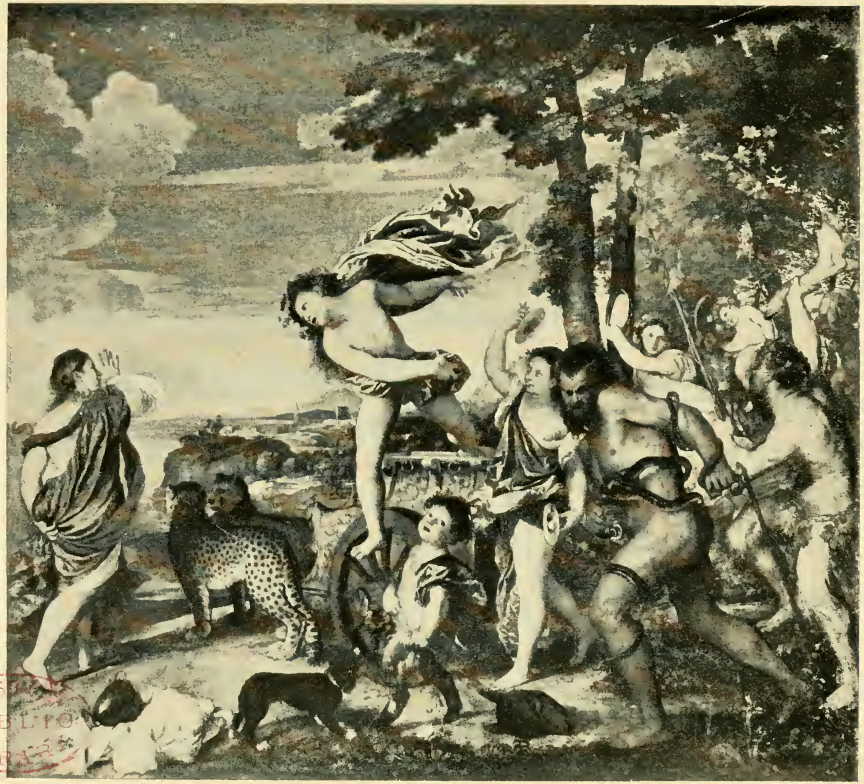
### CHARLES LAMB

HOGARTH excepted, can we produce any one painter within the last fifty years, or since the humour of exhibiting began, that has treated a story *imaginatively?* By this we mean, upon whom has subject so acted that it has seemed to direct *him* — not to be arranged by him? Any upon whom its leading or collateral points have impressed themselves so tyrannically, that he dared not treat it otherwise, lest he should falsify a revelation? Any that has imparted to his compositions, not merely so much truth as is enough to convey a story with clearness, but that individualizing property, which should keep the subject so treated distinct in feature from every other subject, however similar, and to common apprehensions almost identical; so as that we might say this and this part could have found an appropriate place in no other picture in the world but this? Is there anything in modern art — we will not demand that it should be equal — but in any way analogous to what Titian has effected, in that wonderful bringing together of two times in the *Ariadne*, in the National Gallery? Precipitous, with his reeling Satyr rout about him, repeopling and re-illuming suddenly the waste places, drunk with a new fury beyond the grape, Bacchus, born in fire, fire-like flings himself at

the Cretan. This is the time present. With this telling of the story an artist, and no ordinary one, might remain richly proud. Guido in his harmonious version of it, saw no farther. But from the depths of the imaginative spirit Titian has recalled past time, and laid it contributory with the present to one simultaneous effect. With the desert all ringing with the mad symbols of his followers, made lucid with the presence and new offers of a god, — as if unconscious of Bacchus, or but idly casting her eyes as upon some unconcerning pageant — her soul undistracted from Theseus — Ariadne is still pacing the solitary shore, in as much heart-silence, and in almost the same local solitude, with which she awoke at daybreak to catch the forlorn last glances of the sail that bore away the Athenian.

Here are two points miraculously co-uniting; fierce society, with the feeling of solitude still absolute; noon-day revelations, with the accidents of the dull grey dawn unquenched and lingering; the *present* Bacchus with the *past* Ariadne; two stories, with double Time; separate, and harmonizing. Had the artist made the woman one shade less indifferent to the God; still more, had she expressed a rapture at his advent, where would have been the story of the mighty desolation of the heart previous? merged in the insipid accident of a flattering offer met with a welcome acceptance. The broken heart for Theseus was not lightly to be pieced up by a God.

*Lamb's Complete Works*, edited by R. H. Shepherd (London, 1875).



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BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.

*Titian.*

## BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

### (*TITIAN*)

EDWARD T. COOK

BUT though as yet half unconscious, Ariadne is already under her fated star: for above is the constellation of Ariadne's crown — the crown with which Bacchus presented his bride. And observe in connection with the astronomical side of the allegory the figure in Bacchus's train with the serpent round him: this is the serpent-bearer (Milton's "Ophiuchus huge") translated to the skies with Bacchus and Ariadne. Notice too another piece of poetry: the marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne took place in the spring, Ariadne herself being the personification of its return, and Bacchus of its gladness; hence the flowers in the foreground which deck his path.

The picture is as full of the painter's art as of the poet's. Note first the exquisite painting of the vine leaves, and of these flowers in the foreground, as an instance of the "constant habit of the great masters to render every detail of their foreground with the most laborious botanical fidelity." "The foreground is occupied with the common blue iris, the *aquilegia*, and the wild rose (more correctly the *Capparis Spinosa*); *every stamen* of which latter is given, while the blossoms and leaves of the

columbine (a difficult flower to draw) have been studied with the most exquisite accuracy." But this detail is sought not for its own sake, but only so far as is necessary to mark the typical qualities of beauty in the object. Thus "while every stamen of the rose is given because this was necessary to mark the flower, and while the curves and large characters of the leaves are rendered with exquisite fidelity, there is no vestige of particular texture, of moss, bloom, moisture, or any other accident, no dewdrops, nor flies, nor trickeries of any kind: nothing beyond the simple forms and hues of the flowers, even those hues themselves being simplified and broadly rendered. The varieties of *aquilegia* have in reality a greyish and uncertain tone of colour, and never attain the purity of blue with which Titian has gifted his flower. But the master does not aim at the particular colour of individual blossoms; he seizes the type of all, and gives it with the utmost purity and simplicity of which colour is capable." A second point to be noticed is the way in which one kind of truth has often to be sacrificed in order to gain another. Thus here Titian sacrifices truth of aërial effect to richness of tone —tone in the sense, that is, of that quality of colour which makes us feel that the whole picture is in one climate, under one kind of light, and in one kind of atmosphere. "It is difficult to imagine anything more magnificently impossible than the blue of the distant landscape; impossible, not from its vividness, but because it is not faint and aerial enough to account for its purity of colour; it is too dark and blue at the same time; and there is indeed so total a want of atmosphere in it, that, but for the difference

of form, it would be impossible to tell the mountains intended to be ten miles off, from the robe of Ariadne close to the spectator. Yet make this blue faint, aërial, and distant; make it in the slightest degree to resemble the tint of nature's colour; and all the tone of the picture, all the intensity and splendour will vanish on the instant." We may notice lastly what Sir Joshua Reynolds points out (Discourse VIII.), that the harmony of the picture — that wonderful bringing together of two times of which Lamb speaks above, is assisted by the distribution of colours. "To Ariadne is given (say the critics) a red scarf to relieve the figure from the sea, which is behind her. It is not for that reason alone, but for another of much greater consequence; for the sake of the general harmony and effect of the picture. The figure of Ariadne is separated from the great group, and is dressed in blue, which, added to the colour of the sea, makes that quantity of cold colour which Titian thought necessary for the support and brilliancy of the great group; which group is composed, with very little exception, entirely of mellow colours. But as the picture in this case would be divided into two distinct parts, one half cold, and the other warm; it was necessary to carry some of the mellow colours of the great group into the cold part of the picture, and a part of the cold into the great group; accordingly, Titian gave Ariadne a red scarf, and to one of the Bacchante a little blue drapery."

1 *Modern Painters*, Vols. I., XXVII., XXX. (Preface to Second Edition), pt. i. sec. ii. ch. 1 § 5, pt. ii. sec. ii. ch. 1. § 15; Vol. III. pt. iv. ch. ix. § 18; Vol. V. pt. ix. ch. iii. § 31; *Arrows of the Chace*, I. 58.

It is interesting to know that this great picture took Titian three years, off and on, to finish. It was a commission from the Duke of Ferrara, who supplied canvas and frame for it, and repeatedly wrote to press for its delivery; it reached him in 1523.

*A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery* (London and New York, 1888).

## THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

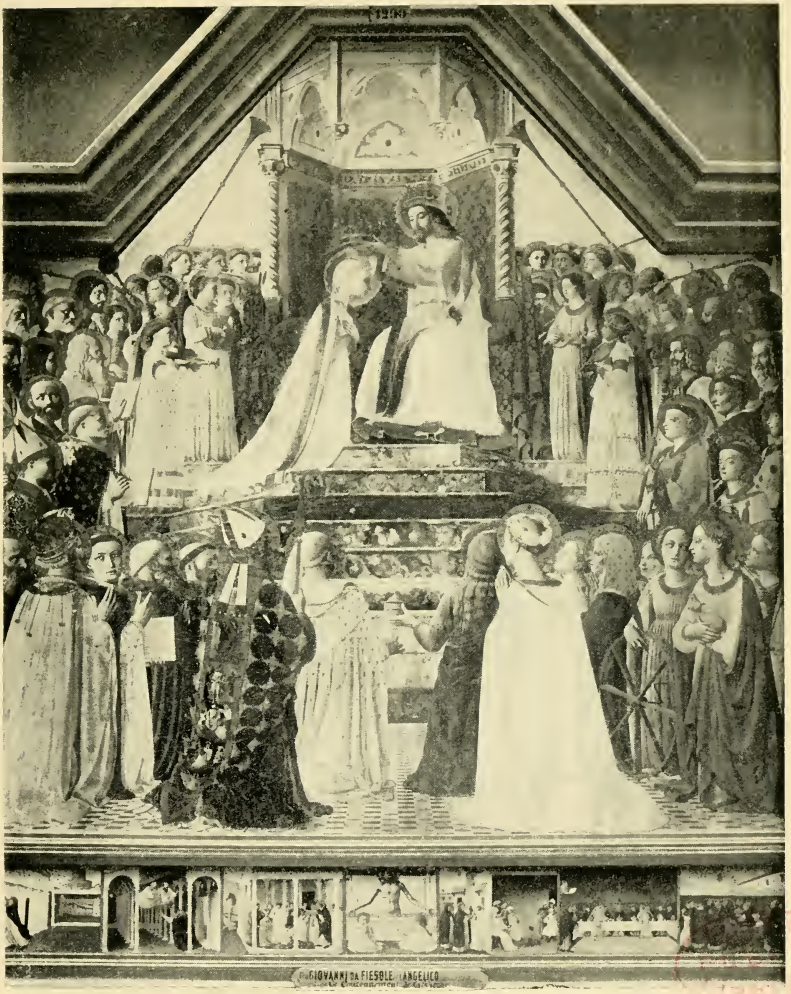
### (*FRA ANGELICO*)

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

*THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN*, by Fra Beato Angelico, seems to have been painted by an angel rather than by a mortal. Time has not tarnished the ideal freshness of this painting, delicate as a miniature in a missal, and whose tints are borrowed from the whiteness of the lily, the rose of the dawn, the blue of the sky, and the gold of the stars. No muddy tones of earth dull these seraphic beings composed of luminous vapours. Upon a throne with marble steps, the varied colours of which are symbolic, Christ is seated, holding a crown of rich workmanship which he is about to place upon the head of his divine mother, kneeling before him, with her head modestly inclined and her hands crossed upon her breast. Around the throne, throng a choir of angel-musicians, playing the trumpet, the theorbo, the *angelot*, and the *viola d' amore*. A light flame flutters about their heads and their great wings palpitate with joy at this glorious coronation which will transform the humble handmaid of the Lord into the Lady of Paradise. To the left, an angel kneels in prayer. In the lower part of the painting with faces uplifted to the sky

the hosts of the blessed, distributed in two groups, adore and contemplate. On one side, are Moses, Saint John the Baptist, the apostles, the bishops, and the founders of orders, distinguished by some emblem, and for greater certainty bearing their names inscribed around their nimbus, or upon the embroideries of their vestments. Saint Dominick holds a branch of lilies and a book. A sun forms the agrafe of Saint Thomas Aquinas's mantle; Charlemagne, "*l'empereur à la barbe fleurie*," is recognizable by his crown of *fleur-de-lis*. Saint Nicholas, bishop of Myra, has by his side the three balls of gold, symbolic of the three purses which he gave to a poor gentleman to dower his three daughters whose beauty exposed them to dangers. On the other side, throng King David, apostles, martyrs, Saint Peter the Dominican with his wounded head, Saint Laurence holding his gridiron, Saint Stephen with a palm in his hand, and Saint George armed from head to foot; then, in the foreground of the picture, is the charming group of saints of perfectly celestial grace: the kneeling Magdalen offers her vase of perfumes; Saint Cæcilia advances, crowned with roses; Saint Clara gleams through her veil, constellated with crosses and golden stars; Saint Catherine of Alexandria leans upon the wheel, the instrument of her execution, as calmly and peacefully as if it were a spinning-wheel; and Saint Agnes holds in her arms a little white lamb, the symbol of innocent purity.

Fra Beato Angelico has given to these youthful saints a celestial and ideal beauty, whose type exists not upon this earth: they are visible souls, rather than bodies, they are thoughts of human form enveloped in these chaste draperies




THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN.
*Fra Angelico.*

of white, rose, and blue, sown with stars and embroidered, clothed as might be the happy spirits who rejoice in the eternal light of Paradise. If there be paintings in Heaven, surely they must resemble those of Fra Angelico.

*Guide de l'Amateur au Musée du Louvre* (Paris, 1882).

# JUDITH

## (*SANDRO BOTTICELLI*)

MAURICE HEWLETT

IN the days when it was verging on a question whether a man could be at the same time a good Christian and an artist the chosen subjects of painting were significant of the approaching crisis — those glaring moral contrasts in history which, for want of a happier term, we call dramatic. Why this was so, whether Art took a hint from Politics, or had withdrawn her more intimate manifestations to await likelier times, is a question it were long to answer. The subjects, at any rate, were such as the Greeks, with their surer instincts and saving grace of sanity in matters of this kind, either forbore to meddle with or treated as decoratively as they treated acanthus-wreaths. To-day we call them "effective" subjects; we find they produce shocks and tremors; we think it braces us to shudder, and we think that Art is a kind of emotional pill; we measure it quantitatively, and say that we "know what we like." And doubtless there is something piquant in the quivering produced, for example, by the sight of white innocence fluttering helpless in a grey shadow of lust. So long as the Bible remained a god that piquancy was found in a *Massacre of the Innocents;* in our own time we find it in a *Faust and Gretchen*, in the Doré Gallery, or in the Royal



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JUDITH.
*Botticelli*

Academy. It was a like appreciation of the certain effect of vivid contrasts as powerful didactic agents (coupled with, or drowning, a something purer and more devout) which had inspired those most beautiful and distinctive of all the symbols of Catholicism, the *Adoration of the Kings*, the Christ-child cycle, and which raised the Holy Child and Maid-Mother to their place above the mystic tapers and the Cross. Naturally the Old Testament, that garner of grim tales, proved a sick wine: *David and Golias*, *Susanna and the Elders*, the *Sacrifice* of *Isaac*, *Jethro's Daughter*. But the story of Judith did not come to be painted in Tuscan sanctuaries until Donatello of Florence had first cast her in bronze at the prayer of Cosimo *pater patriæ*. Her entry was dramatic enough at least: Dame Fortune may well have sniggered as she spun round the city on her ball. Cosimo the patriot and his splendid grandson were no sooner dead and their brood sent flying, than Donatello's *Judith* was set up in the Piazza as a fit emblem of rescue from tyranny, with the vigorous motto, to make assurance double, "EXEMPLVM SALVTIS PVBLICAE CIVES POSVERE." Savonarola, who knew his Bible, saw here a keener application of Judith's pious sin. A few years later that same *Judith* saw him burn. Thus, as an incarnate cynicism, she will pass; as a work of art she is admittedly one of her great creator's failures. Her neighbour *Perseus* of the Loggia makes this only too plain! For Cellini has seized the right moment in a deed of horror, and Donatello, with all his downrightness and grip of the fact, has hit upon the wrong. It is fatal to freeze a moment of time into an eternity of writing. His *Judith* will never strike: her arm is palsied

where it swings. The Damoclean sword is a fine incident for poetry; but Holofernes was no Damocles, and if he had been, it were intolerable to cast his experience in bronze. Donatello has essayed that thing impossible for sculpture, to arrest a moment instead of denote a permanent attribute. Art is adjectival, is it not, O Donatello? Her business is to qualify facts, to say what things are, not to state them, to affirm that they are. A sculptured *Judith* was done not long afterwards, carved, as we shall see, with a burin on a plate; and the man who so carved her was a painter.

Meantime, *pari passu*, almost, a painter who was a poet was trying his hand; a man who knew his Bible and his mythology and was equally at home with either. Perhaps it is not extravagant to say that you cannot be an artist unless you are at home with mythology, unless mythology is the swiftest and most direct expression of your being, so that you can be measured by it as a man is known by his books, or a woman by her clothes, her way of bowing, her amusements, or her charities. For mythopœia is just this, the incarnating the spirit of natural fact; and the generic name of that power is Art. A kind of creation, a clothing of essence in matter, an hypostatizing (if you will have it) of an object of intuition within the folds of an object of sense. Lessing did not dig so deep as his Greek Voltaire (whose "dazzling antithesis," after all, touches the root of the matter), for he did not see that rhythmic extension in time or space, as the case may be, with all that that implies — colour, value, proportion, all the convincing incidents of form — is simply the mode of

all arts, the thing with which Art's substance must be interpenetrated, until the two form a whole, lovely, golden, irresistible, and inevitable as Nature's pieces are. This substance, as I have said, is the spirit of natural fact. And so mythology is Art at its simplest and barest (where the bodily medium is neither word, nor texture of stone, nor dye), the parent art from which all the others were, so to speak, begotten by man's need. This much of explanation, I am sorry to say, is necessary, before we turn to our mytho-poet of Florence, to see what he made out of the story of Judith.

First of all, though, what has the story of Judith to do with mythology? It is a legend, one of the finest of Semitic legends; and between legend and myth there is as great a gulf as between Jew and Greek. I believe there are no myths proper to Israel — I do not see how such magnificent egoists could contract to the necessary state of awe — and I do not know that there are any legends proper to Greece which are divorced from real myths. For where a myth is the incarnation of the spirit of natural fact, a legend is the embellishment of an historical event: a very different thing. A natural fact is permanent and elemental, an historical event is transient and superficial. Take one instance out of a score. The rainbow links heaven and earth. Iris, then, to the myth-making Greek, was Jove's messenger, intermediary between God and Man. That is to incarnate a constant, natural fact. Plato afterwards, making her a daughter of Thaumas, incarnated a fact, psychological, but none the less constant, none the less natural. But, to say, as the legend-loving Jew said,

that Noah floated his ark over a drowning world and secured for his posterity a standing covenant with God, who then and once for all set his bow in the heavens; that is to indicate, somewhere, in the dim backward and abysm of time, an historical event. The rainbow is suffered as the skirt of the robe of Noah, who was an ancestor of Israel. So the Judith poem may be a decorated event, or it may be the barest history in a splendid epical setting: the point to remember is that it cannot be, as legend, a subject for creative art. The artist, in the language of Neo-Platonism, is a demiurge; he only of men can convert dead things into life. And now we will go into the Uffizi.

Mr. Ruskin, in his petulant-playful way, has touched upon the feeling of amaze most people have who look for the first time at Botticelli's *Judith* tripping smoothly and lightly over the hill-country, her steadfast maid dogging with intent patient eyes every step she takes. You say it is flippant, affected, pedantic. For answer, I refer you to the sage himself, who, from his point of view — that painting may fairly deal with a chapter of history — is perfectly right. The prevailing strain of the story is the strength of weakness — *ex dulci fortitudo*, to invert the old enigma. "O God, O my God, hear me also, a widow. Break down their stateliness by the hand of a woman!" It is the refrain that runs through the whole history of Israel, that reasonable complacency of a little people in their God-fraught destiny. And, withal, a streak of savage spite: that the audacious oppressor shall be done scornfully to death. There is the motive of Jael and Sisera too. So "she smote twice upon his neck with all

her might, and she took away his head from him, and tumbled his body down from the bed." Ho! what a fate for the emissary of the Great King. Wherefore, once more, the jubilant paradox, "The Lord hath smitten him by the hand of a woman!" That is it: the amazing, thrilling antithesis insisted on over and over again by the old Hebrew bard. "Her sandals ravished his eyes, her beauty took his mind prisoner, and the fauchion passed through his neck." That is the *leit-motif:* Sandro the poet knew it perfectly well and taught it to the no small comfort of Mr. Ruskin and his men. Giuditta, dainty, blue-eyed, a girl still and three years a widow, flits homeward through a spring landscape of grey and green and the smile of a milky sky, being herself the dominant of the chord, with her bough of slipt olive and her jagged scimitar, with her pretty blue fal-lals smocked and puffed, and her yellow curls floating over her shoulders. On her slim feet are the sandals that ravished his eyes; all her maiden bravery is dancing and fluttering like harebells in the wind. Behind her plods the slave girl folded in an orange scarf, bearing that shapeless, nameless burden of hers, the head of the grim Lord Holofernes. Oh, for that, it is the legend itself! For look at the girl's eyes. What does their dreamy solemnity mean if not, "the Lord hath smitten him by the hand of a woman"? One other delicate bit of symbolizing he has allowed himself, which I may not omit. You are to see by whom this deed was done: by a woman who has unsexed herself. Judith is absorbed in her awful service; her robe trails on the ground and clings about her knees; she is unconscious of

the hindrance. The gates of Bethulia are in sight; the Chaldean horsemen are abroad, but she has no anxiety to escape. She is swift because her life just now courses swiftly; but there is no haste. The maid, you shall mark, picks up her skirts with careful hand, and steps out the more lustily for it.

So far Botticelli the poet, and so far also Mr. Ruskin, reader of pictures. What says Botticelli the painter? Had he no instincts to tell him that his art could have little to say to a legend? Or that a legend might be the subject of an epic (here, indeed, was an epic ready made), might, under conditions, be the subject of a drama; but could not, under any conditions, be alone the subject of a picture? I don't for a moment suggest that he had, or that any artist ever goes to work in this double-entry, methodical way, but are we entitled to say that he was not influenced by his predilections, his determinations as a draughtsman, when he squared himself to illustrate the Bible? We say that the subject of a picture is the spirit of natural fact. If Botticelli was a painter, *that* is what he must have looked for, and must have found, in every picture he painted. Where, then, was he to get his natural facts in the story of Judith? What is, in that story, the natural, essential (as opposed to the historical, fleeting) fact? It is murder. Judith's deed was what the old Scots law incisively calls *slauchter*. It may be glossed over as assassination or even execution — in fact, in Florence, where Giuliano was soon to be taken off, it did not fail to be so called: it remains, however, just murder. Botticelli, not shirking the position at all, judged murder to be a natural fact, and its spirit or

essence swiftness and stealth. Chaucer, let us note, had been of the same mind :

"The smyler with the knyf under his cloke,"

and so on, in lines not be matched for hasty and dreadful suggestion. Swiftness and stealth, the ambush, the averted face and the sudden stab, are the standing elements of murder : pare off all the rest, you come down to that. Your staring looks, your blood, your "chirking," are accidentals. They may be there (for each of us carries a carcase), but the horror of sudden death is above them : a man may strangle with his thoughts cleaner than with his pair of hands. And as "matter" is but the stuff wherewith Nature works, and she is only insulted, not defied, when we flout or mangle it, so it is against the high dignity of Art to insist upon the carrion she must use. She will press, here the terror, there the radiance, of essential fact ; she will leave to us, seeing it in her face, to add mentally the poor stage properties we have grown to trust. No blood, if you please. Therefore, in Botticelli's *Judith*, nothing but the essentials are insisted on ; the rest we instantly imagine, but it is not there to be sensed. The panel is in a tremor. So swift and secret is Judith, so furtive the maid, we need no hurrying horsemen to remind us of her oath, —"Hear me, and I will do a thing which shall go throughout all generations to the children of our nation." Sudden death in the air ; nature has been outraged. But there is no drop of blood — the thin scarlet line along the sword-edge is a symbol if you will — the pale head in the cloth is a mere "thing :" yet we all know what has been done.

*Earthwork out of Tuscany* (London, 1895).

## THE AVENUE OF MIDDELHARNAIS

(*HOBBEMA*)

PAUL LAFOND

SOME small and slender trees, branchless almost to their tops, border the two sides of a road, which occupies the centre of the picture, and extend all the way to a village which closes the horizon with several masts and hulls of ships in profile against a sky where the sun is veiled; to the right, a nursery-garden of shrubs and rose-trees separated from the road by a wide ditch full of water; then, in the middle distance, the buildings of a farm; to the left, a clump of trees and another ditch, and further back the spire of a church; a huntsman, with a gun on his shoulder and preceded by his dog, is walking on the road, and two peasants — a man and a woman — have stopped to chat on the path that leads across to the farm; a horticulturist is grafting the shrubs in the nursery-garden; and this corner of a landscape has sufficed for Hobbema to produce a masterpiece which the National Gallery of London is justly proud to possess. This youngest of the great European Museums is not the poorest and owns very considerable works of every school.

What is most admired in this picture of the Dutch Master? The firmness of touch, the brilliancy of the key, the ease and breadth of execution without the slightest sign of



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THE AVENUE OF MIDDELHARNAIS.

*Hobbema.*

hesitation or alteration, or the extraordinary perfection with which the perspective is rendered? We do not know. Despite the complexity of the subject, the one defect of which may be a slight lack of unity in the composition, the general effect of the picture is simple and powerful, and the gradation of colour harmonious and correct. It would be impossible to go any farther than this artist has done in the interpretation of this tranquil Dutch landscape. The deep values of the trees, the yellowish greys of the road, and the sluggish water of the ditches, together with the blue sky flecked with little grey and white clouds produce an ensemble of absolute calm. The little figures which give life to this canvas are so fine and delicate in execution that they leave nothing to be desired. Here, as very rarely happens, the multiplication of details does not spoil the effect of the whole.

This is a picture absolutely without a peer, and a page by itself in Hobbema's work. This is true in every sense, even in the choice of subject; for most frequently the painter borrows the motives for his pictures from a different phase of nature. Ordinarily he interprets forest-clearings; the skirts of a wood with poor huts hidden by great trees; calm and fresh pools; and streams feeding humble mills. Witness the one in the Louvre for which he showed so great a predilection and which he reproduced under so many varied aspects.

But whatever may be the subject he treats, he always remains the happy interpreter of the calm scenery of his own country of low and drowned horizons; the painter attracted by the light which with him envelops everything

it approaches — trees, cottages, ground, waters, and distances bathed in delicious depths.

Nature, gentle and friendly to man, which he saw with a simplicity and a clearness approached by no other painter, attracted and charmed him above all else, in contrast to his contemporary and friend, J. Ruysdael, who, led away by heart-breaking melancholy, would never see any side of her but the energetic and lugubrious, the sad and troubled.

In his forests, on the banks of his ponds and rivers, in the neighbourhood of his huts and mills, Hobbema wants to have company; so he has sown his landscapes with figures, and they are constantly animated with people and animals. Are these figures always his own? It would be imprudent to affirm this, although they harmonize in most cases so marvellously with the rest of the picture, and it would therefore seem difficult for them to be by another hand. However, if we must defer to his historian, von Wurzbach, they are very frequently the work of Nicholaas Berghem, Adriaen Van de Velde, Lingelbach, Philip Wouwerman, Isack van Ostade, Pijnacker, etc., which would prove, at least, that he knew how to select his collaborators.

The painter of the *Avenue of Middelharnais* in the National Gallery, of the *Mill* in our Louvre, and of many other masterpieces was yet unknown, or rather despised, not very long ago, and it is quite recently that his name has emerged from the unjust neglect in which it was buried. This great name of Hobbema had fallen into such discredit that when one of his pictures fell by chance into the hands of an amateur or merchant the signature would

be effaced as quickly as possible and replaced by that of J. Ruysdael, the sole painter worthy of entering into competition with him.

Who then is this Meindert Hobbema? Where was he born? Where did he live? What was his life? Alas, we know very little concerning this impeccable master, one of the greatest glories of Dutch painting. The principal historians of the Netherland school are ignorant of him or pass him by in silence. Houbraken, Descamps, and d'Argenville are dumb regarding him. Those who, by chance, treat of him, commit so many errors that it is best to take no account of their words. Three cities, Amsterdam, Koeverden, and a village, Middelharnais, in the province of Guelder, which he has made famous by the marvellous picture, the subject of our notice, dispute the honour of being his birthplace. But, it seems, although nothing can be affirmed with certainty, that he first saw the light in Amsterdam in 1638. He was the son of a sergeant in the Netherland army and spent his early life in Koeverden, where he was baptized and where his father was in garrison. At a later period he established himself in Amsterdam, where he became the pupil and soon the comrade and friend of J. Ruysdael, who served as witness to his marriage with Eeltie Vinck, celebrated in this same city, Oct. 2, 1668. From that time he scarcely ever left Amsterdam, where he died, Dec. 14, 1709, five years after his wife, in the sad Roosegraft, which had seen Rembrandt expire thirty years before. He was sixty-seven years of age. Have we any need to add that, like Rembrandt, the painter of painters, he died poor?

That is all we know of Meindert Hobbema. It is little enough, but quite sufficient. Have we not the man complete in his work? What more could we wish?

Jouin, *Chefs-d'œuvre: Peinture, Sculpture, Architecture* (Paris, 1895–97).

## THE DANCE OF THE DAUGHTER OF HERODIAS

### (*ANDREA DEL SARTO*)

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

WITH the majestic and tragic things of art we began, at the landmarks set by Leonardo and Michael Angelo; and are come now, not quite at random, to the lyric and elegiac loveliness of Andrea del Sarto. To praise him would need sweeter and purer speech than this of ours. His art is to me as the Tuscan April in its temperate days, fresh and tender and clear, but lulled and kindled by such air and light as fills the life of the growing year with fire. At Florence only can one trace and tell how great a painter and how various he was. There only, but surely there, can the influence and pressure of the things of time on his immortal spirit be understood; how much of him was killed or changed, how much of him could not be. There are the first-fruits of his flowering manhood, when the bright and buoyant genius in him had free play and large delight in its handiwork; when the fresh interest of invention was still his, and the dramatic sense, the pleasure in the play of life, the power of motion and variety; before the old strength of sight and of flight had passed from weary wing and clouding eye, the old pride and energy of enjoyment had gone out of hand and heart. How the change fell

upon him, and how it wrought, any one may see who compares his later with his earlier works, with the series, for instance, of outlines representing the story of St. John Baptist in the desolate little cloister of Lo Scalzo. In these mural designs there is such exultation and exuberance of young power, of fresh passion and imagination, that only by the innate grace can one recognize the hand of the master whom hitherto we know by the works of his after life, when the gift of grace had survived the gift of invention. This and all other gifts it did survive; all pleasure of life and power of mind, all the conscience of the man, his will, his character, his troubles, his triumphs, his sin and honour, heart-break and shame. All these his charm of touch, his sweetness of execution, his "Elysian beauty, melancholy grace," outlived, and blossomed in their dust. Turn from that cloistral series to those later pictures, painted when he was "faultless" and nothing more; and seeing all the growth and all the gain, all the change and all the loss, one to whom the second was unknown would feel and foreknow his story and his sorrow. In the cloister, what life and fullness of growing and strengthening genius, what joyous sense of its growth and the fair field before it, what dramatic delight in character and action! where St. John preaches in the wilderness and the few first listeners are gathered together at his feet, old people and poor, soul-stricken, silent — women with worn still faces, and a spirit in their tired aged eyes that feeds heartily and hungrily on his words — all the haggard funereal group filled from the fountain of his faith with gradual fire and white-heat of soul; or where Salome dances before Herod, an incarnate



The Dance of the Daughter of Herodias.
*Andrea del Sarto.*

figure of music, grave and graceful, light and glad, the song of a bird made flesh, with perfect poise of her sweet slight body from the maiden face to the melodious feet; no tyrannous or treacherous goddess of deadly beauty, but a simple virgin, with the cold charm of girlhood and the mobile charm of childhood; as indifferent and innocent when she stands before Herodias and when she receives the severed head of John with her slender and steady hands; a pure bright animal, knowing nothing of man, and of life nothing but instinct and motion. In her mother's mature and conscious beauty there is visible the voluptuous will of a harlot and a queen; but, for herself, she has neither malice nor pity; her beauty is a maiden force of nature, capable of bloodshed without bloodguiltiness; the King hangs upon the music of her movement, the rhythm of leaping life in her fair fleet limbs, as one who listens to a tune, subdued by the rapture of sound, absorbed in purity of passion. I know not where the subject has been touched with such fine and keen imagination as here. The time came when another than Salome was to dance before the eyes of the painter; and she required of him the head of no man, but his own soul; and he paid the forfeit into her hands. With the coming of that time upon him came the change upon his heart and hand; "the work of an imperious whorish woman." Those words, set by the prophet as a brand upon the fallen forehead of the chosen bride, come back to mind as one studies in her husband's pictures the full calm lineaments, the large and serene beauty of Lucrezia del Fede; a predominant and placid beauty, placid and implacable, not to be pleaded with or fought against. Voluptuous

always and slothful, subtle at times no doubt and sweet beyond measure, full of heavy beauty and warm, slow grace, her features bear no sign of possible love or conscience. Seen side by side with his clear sad face, hers tells more of the story than any written record, even though two poets of our age have taken it up. In the feverish and feeble melodrama of Alfred de Musset there is no touch of tragedy, hardly a shadow of passionate and piteous truth; in Mr. Browning's noblest poem — his noblest it seems to me — the whole tragedy is distilled into the right words, the whole man raised up and reclothed with flesh. One point only is but lightly touched upon — missed it could not be by an eye so sharp and skilful — the effect upon his art of the poisonous solvent of love. How his life was corroded by it and his soul burnt into dead ashes, we are shown in full; but we are not shown in full what as a painter he was before, what as a painter he might have been without it. This is what I think the works of his youth and age, seen near together as at Florence, make manifest to any loving and studious eye. In those later works, the inevitable and fatal figure of the woman recurs with little diversity or change. She has grown into his art, and made it even as herself; rich, monotonous in beauty, calm, complete, without heart or spirit. But his has not been always "the low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand" it was then. He had started on his way towards another goal than that. Nothing now is left him to live for but his faultless hand and her faultless face — still and full, suggestive of no change in the steady deep-lidded eyes and heavy lovely lips without love or pudency or pity. Here among his sketches we find it

again and ever the same, crowned and clothed only with the glory and the joy and the majesty of the flesh. When the luxurious and subtle sense which serves the woman for a soul looks forth and speaks plainest from those eyes and lips, she is sovereign and stately still; there is in her beauty nothing common or unclean. We cannot but see her for what she is; but her majestic face makes no appeal for homage or forgiveness.

*Essays and Studies* (London, 1875).

## ADORATION OF THE MAGI

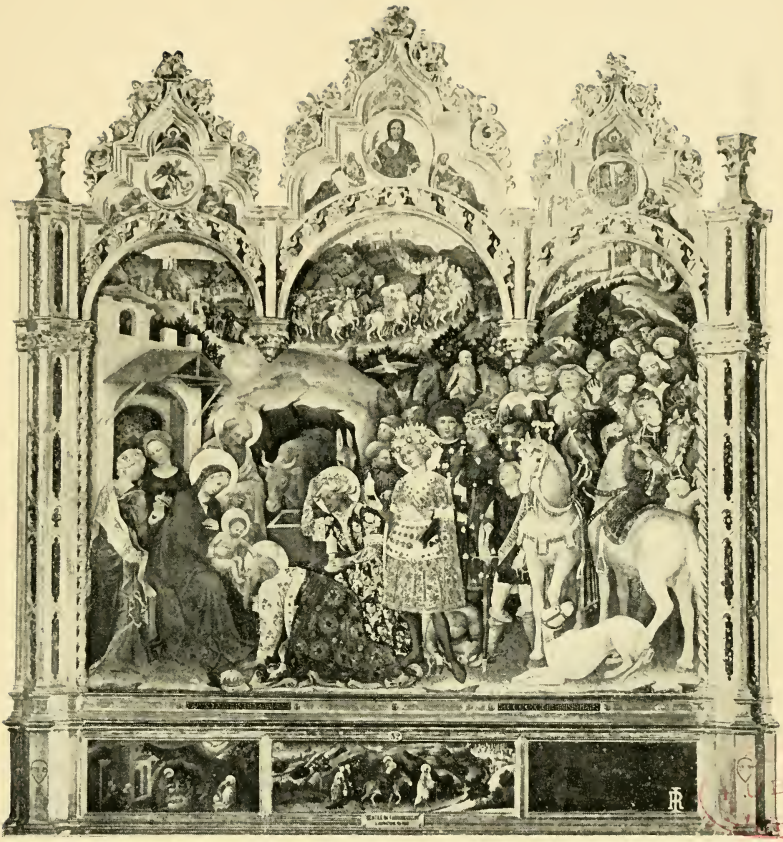
### (*GENTILE DA FABRIANO*)

F. A. GRUYER

AT the beginning of the Fifteenth Century, Gentile da Fabriano [1] painted an *Adoration of the Magi*,[2] in which the faithful representation of contemporary scenes is again found. The Virgin, completely enveloped in a large blue cloak, is seated in front of the stable, with her head piously inclined towards her Son whom she is regarding with tender gaze. St. Joseph is at her side and behind her are two young women who are holding and admiring the gifts offered to the Saviour. The infant Jesus has laid his hand on the head of the oldest of the Magi, who, prostrated, kisses his feet with devotion. The two other Kings are much younger than the first one. They are presenting their offerings to the Son of God, and are about to lay their crowns before him. Then follows the retinue of these Magi; and in this throng, where may be counted at least seventy figures on foot and on horseback, of all ranks, of all ages, and of all sizes, it is easy to recognize a trace of those popular festivals instituted in the preceding century.

1 One of the founders of the Roman School.

2 This painting is in the gallery of the Accademia delle Belle Arti, Florence. At its base on one side one may read: OPVS : GENTILIS DE : FABRIANO; and on the other side: MCCCC.X.X.III MENSIS : MAII.



. Adoration of the Magi.
*Fabriano*

Despite some slight Oriental disguises, one may easily recognize the bearing, the general features, and the costumes of the Italy of the first years of the Fifteenth Century. Gentile was also pleased to add to the "superb chargers" mentioned by Lattuda, all kinds of animals, especially the apes that the Milanese loved to include in their pompous processions. Finally, in the background of this picture he has painted the embattled walls of a Guelph city with two massive gates; the one through which the Magi have entered, the other through which they will take their departure. Is there anything here, either in the foreground or the background that suggests Jerusalem? Do you not notice rather a resemblance to the fortifications of Milan, with the Porta Romana and the Porta San-Lorenzo?

After having painted the frescoes of the Cathedral of Orvieto, Gentile lived for a long time in the north of Italy, particularly in Venice. It is very likely that while there, closer to the Orient and more especially nearer to Milan, he painted his *Adoration of the Magi*. We may then certainly consider this as a faithful portrayal of one of those public ceremonials, which without doubt he had witnessed, and in which he had most likely participated. Only, ignoring the passions and violence of the period, he left everywhere in this painting the imprint of his own gentle and tender nature. We know that Michael Angelo remarked of Gentile that his name was in perfect harmony with the tone of his works. None of them can more thoroughly convince us of the justice of this observation than this picture. From the Virgin herself to the most

humble of the servants of the Magi, and indeed even to the animals, that beautiful soul which had for its servant a talent replete with delicacy and suavity may be traced.[1]

*Les Vierges de Raphaël* (Paris, 1869).

[1] In a predella below this picture may be seen *The Adoration of the Shepherds* and *The Flight into Egypt*. Gentile da Fabriano also painted an *Adoration of the Magi* at San-Domenico, Perugia. This second picture is of less value than the one at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Florence.

## PORTRAIT OF GEORG GISZE

(*HOLBEIN*)

### ANTONY VALABRÈGUE

WHEN Holbein returned to London towards the end of 1531, leaving Basle, where he had worked for nearly three years, he found himself immediately occupied with several portraits of the merchants of the Hanseatic League. During his first sojourn in England, he had painted the chancellor, Sir Thomas More, his protector and friend, and he had traced the features of several members of the aristocracy. On his return, circumstances for his gaining access to the court were less favourable. Henry VIII. was obeying his own good pleasure and satisfying all his caprices, and the chancellor was holding aloof, and could not exert his influence. Holbein did not now possess the title of Painter to the King, consequently he had to consider himself happy in obtaining the favour of his compatriots.

The German merchants had formed themselves into a powerful association; they found themselves united in a kind of city, which went by the name of Stahlhof. There they had their Guildhall, their Bourse, the place where their affairs were managed and which contained their stores

of merchandise, and their counting-houses. It was a separate quarter, where each one could also have his own dwelling.

The company was opulent; the industry of the members of the Hanseatic League was chiefly in iron and the precious metals; among them were armourers, watch-makers, and goldsmiths. In the Stahlhof, called in English the Steelyard, and which the founders themselves had designated the Palace of Steel, was to be noted a certain opulence and pursuit of comfort which is to be found in all ages. After having finished their business, the merchants formed a social circle of their own. They had a festival-hall of their own, and they could walk about in spacious gardens which extended along the banks of the Thames.

Among these representatives of high finance a painter might find a choice *clientèle* that would never care about the price of an order. We know that Holbein painted the portraits of many of these rich merchants, for to-day we find these canvases, whose authenticity has been established, in Museums and important collections. We may therefore suppose that the German merchants appreciated Holbein at his true value; doubtless they disputed the honour of having their features reproduced by a master of such remarkable talent.

The portrait of Georg Gisze, which is before our readers, is certainly the finest work of this series. When we saw this masterly work in the Museum of Berlin, to which it belongs, it left an indelible impression upon us which we still feel at this distance. It is incontestably a masterpiece from every point of view; in the Gallery there



Portrait of Georg Giszé.
*Holbein.*

is but one other picture of the same kind which may be compared to it, a painting which suggests a parallel in a single detail, — *The Man with the Pinks*, by Van Eyck.

Holbein has represented Georg Gisze in his mercantile office, at a table, holding a letter which he is about to open, and surrounded by small objects, articles for which he has use in his business and in his every-day life. This man appears before us in a marvellous pose, among these material surroundings and in this professional scene. Observe his calm attitude and his almost placid physiognomy: we notice, however, the firm and decided air of a wealthy and elegant merchant. And, at the same time, we are sure that the type represented here is not of sudden growth: everything about him reveals intelligence.

Georg Gisze is young; the painter has told us his name and his age in an inscription on the wall: he is thirty-four. We do not lack information about him. We like him under that air of youthful seriousness; we see upon his face that dawning gravity in which the blossom of feeling already exists, but its plenitude and maturity are still to come. And in attentively examining our personage we are struck with his reflective and searching glance. We seem to have a glimpse in him of an undefined melancholy. This expression surprises us in this man, who ought to be happy at living and who lacks no pleasures that Fortune can procure.

This is a state of mind which is indicated to us, moreover, by a motto traced above his name on one of the walls of his office: *Nulla sine mœrore voluptas*. Why this

thought? Is it purely emblematic, or does it contain an allusion to some private matter? We are led to believe that it is intended as a complementary explanation, that it was placed upon the picture because it was in sympathy with a train of ideas special to the model. Perhaps it recalls some domestic sorrow, the lively grief left by an absent one, or by some eternal separation. A moral mystery, which seems to us very attractive, hovers around Georg Gisze.

He has long fair hair confined beneath a black cap; his smooth-shaven face is rather thin. He wears a rich costume, a pourpoint of cerise silk with puffed sleeves, and, over this pourpoint, a cloak of black wool lined with fur. The table on which he is leaning is covered with a Persian rug, and, beside the various objects scattered upon it, you notice a bunch of carnations in an artistically wrought Venetian glass. These carnations, like the motto, awake in us an image, a poetical reminiscence. Sentiment, Germanic in its essence, mingled with dreams and vague ideals, is introduced into this merchant's office.

The master has fully displayed with supreme power, and with all the resources of his art, the colours of the costume, the paleness of the face, and the freshness of the flesh standing out from the background of green panels. He has played with all the various tones of the accessories, book and registers, inkstand, watch, and scales for weighing the gold. Every detail, with no link missing, contributes to form the perfect harmony of the whole.

We cannot too greatly admire the singular clearness and extraordinary precision with which the artist has placed in

relief every detail that can make a figure live and render a work essentially eloquent.[1]

People have tried to make out that Georg Gisze was a merchant of Basle. He would then have been of the race connected most closely with the Master's life. This opinion has been discussed by Woltmann, Holbein's historian. The superscriptions on the sufficiently numerous letters, which are reproduced in this painting, must be especially noticed; they are written in an ancient dialect which seems rather to be that of central Germany.[2]

Jouin, *Chefs-d'œuvre: Peinture, Sculpture, Architecture* (Paris, 1895–97).

[1] In one corner of the picture is found this inscription with its Latin distich :

Imaginem Georgii Gysenii
Ista refert vultus, quâ cernis Īmago Georgi
Sic oculos vivos, sic habet ille genas.
Anno ætatis suæ XXXIII.
Anno dom. 1532.

[2] We read on one of these letters : *Dem erszamen Jergen Gisze to Lunden in Engelant, mynem broder to handen.*

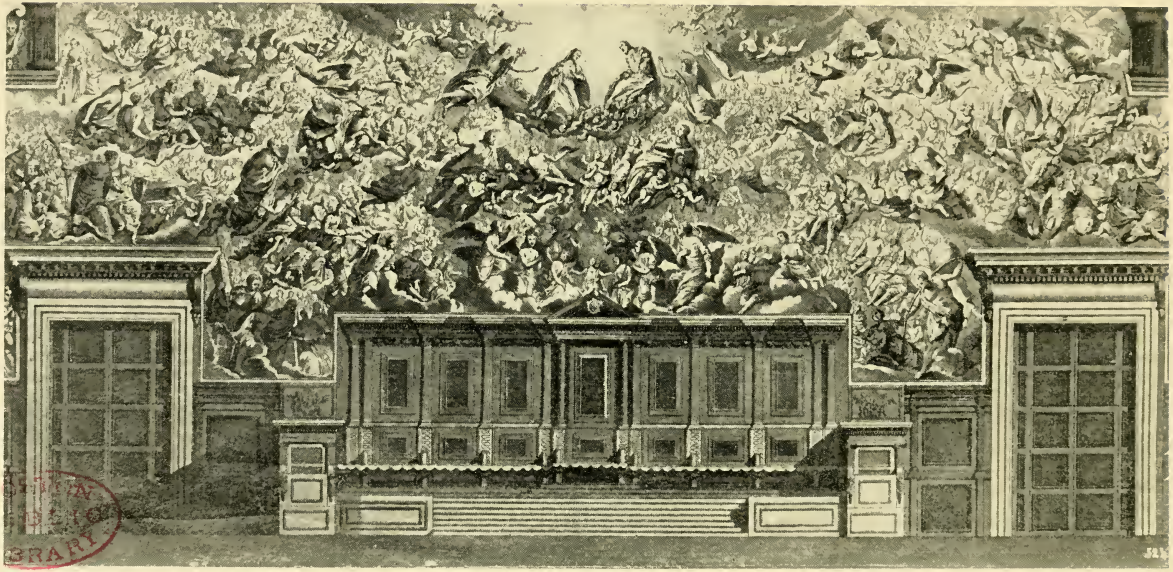
# PARADISE

## (*TINTORET*)

### JOHN RUSKIN

THE chief reason why we all know the *Last Judgment* of Michael Angelo, and not the *Paradise* of Tintoret, is the same love of sensation which makes us read the *Inferno* of Dante, and not his *Paradise;* and the choice, believe me, is our fault, not his; some farther evil influence is due to the fact that Michael Angelo had invested all his figures with picturesque and palpable elements of effect, while Tintoret has only made them lovely in themselves and has been content that they should deserve, not demand, your attention.

You are accustomed to think the figures of Michael Angelo sublime — because they are dark, and colossal, and involved, and mysterious — because, in a word, they look sometimes like shadows, and sometimes like mountains, and sometimes like spectres, but never like human beings. Believe me, yet once more, in what I told you long since — man can invent nothing nobler than humanity. He cannot raise his form into anything better than God made it, by giving it either the flight of birds or strength of beasts, by enveloping it in mist, or heaping it into multitude. Your pilgrim must look like a pilgrim in a straw hat, or you will not make him into one with cockle and nimbus;



PARADISE.
*Tintoret.*

an angel must look like an angel on the ground, as well as in the air; and the much-denounced pre-Raphaelite faith that a saint cannot look saintly unless he has thin legs, is not more absurd than Michael Angelo's, that a Sibyl cannot look Sibylline unless she has thick ones.

All that shadowing, storming, and coiling of his, when you look into it, is mere stage decoration, and that of a vulgar kind. Light is, in reality, more awful than darkness — modesty more majestic than strength; and there is truer sublimity in the sweet joy of a child, or the sweet virtue of a maiden, than in the strength of Antæus, or thunder-clouds of Ætna.

Now, though in nearly all his greater pictures, Tintoret is entirely carried away by his sympathy with Michael Angelo, and conquers him in his own field; — outflies him in motion, outnumbers him in multitude, outwits him in fancy, and outflames him in rage, — he can be just as gentle as he is strong: and that *Paradise*, though it is the largest picture in the world, without any question, is also the thoughtfullest, and most precious.

The Thoughtfullest! — it would be saying but little, as far as Michael Angelo is concerned.

For consider it of yourselves. You have heard, from your youth up (and all educated persons have heard for three centuries), of this *Last Judgment* of his, as the most sublime picture in existence.

The subject of it is one which should certainly be interesting to you in one of two ways.

If you never expect to be judged for any of your own doings, and the tradition of the coming of Christ is to you

as an idle tale — still, think what a wonderful tale it would be, were it well told. You are at liberty, disbelieving it, to range the fields — Elysian and Tartarean, of all imagination. You may play with it, since it is false; and what a play would it not be, well written? Do you think the tragedy, or the miracle play, or the infinitely Divina Commedia of the Judgment of the astonished living who were dead; — the undeceiving of the sight of every human soul, understanding in an instant all the shallow and depth of past life and future, — face to face with both, — and with God: — this apocalypse to all intellect, and completion to all passion, this minute and individual drama of the perfected history of separate spirits, and of their finally accomplished affections! — think you, I say, all this was well told by mere heaps of dark bodies curled and convulsed in space, and fall as of a crowd from a scaffolding, in writhed concretions of muscular pain?

But take it the other way. Suppose you believe, be it never so dimly or feebly, in some kind of Judgment that is to be; — that you admit even the faint contingency of retribution, and can imagine, with vivacity enough to fear, that in this life, at all events, if not in another — there may be for you a Visitation of God, and a questioning — What hast thou done? The picture, if it is a good one, should have a deeper interest, surely on *this* postulate? Thrilling enough, as a mere imagination of what is never to be — now, as a conjecture of what *is* to be, held the best that in eighteen centuries of Christianity has for men's eyes been made; — Think of it so!

And then, tell me, whether you yourselves, or any one

you have known, did ever at any time receive from this picture any, the smallest vital thought, warning, quickening, or help? It may have appalled, or impressed you for a time, as a thunder-cloud might: but has it ever taught you anything — chastised in you anything — confirmed a purpose — fortified a resistance — purified a passion? I know that for you, it has done none of these things; and I know also that, for others, it has done very different things. In every vain and proud designer who has since lived, that dark carnality of Michael Angelo's has fostered insolent science, and fleshly imagination. Daubers and blockheads think themselves painters, and are received by the public as such, if they know how to foreshorten bones and decipher entrails; and men with capacity of art either shrink away (the best of them always do) into petty felicities and innocencies of genre painting — landscapes, cattle, family breakfasts, village schoolings, and the like; or else, if they have the full sensuous art-faculty that would have made true painters of them, being taught from their youth up, to look for and learn the body instead of the spirit, have learned it and taught it to such purpose, that at this hour, when I speak to you, the rooms of the Royal Academy of England, receiving also what of best can be sent there by the masters of France, contain *not one* picture honourable to the arts of their age; and contain many which are shameful in their record of its manners.

Of that, hereafter. I will close to-day by giving you some brief account of the scheme of Tintoret's *Paradise*, in justification that it is the thoughtfullest as well as mightiest picture in the world.

In the highest centre is Christ, leaning on the globe of the earth, which is of dark crystal. Christ is crowned with a glory as of the sun, and all the picture is lighted by that glory, descending through circle beneath circle of cloud, and of flying or throned spirits.

The Madonna, beneath Christ, and at some interval from Him, kneels to Him. She is crowned with the Seven stars, and kneels on a cloud of angels, whose wings change into ruby fire where they are near her.

The three great Archangels, meeting from three sides, fly towards Christ. Michael delivers up his scales and sword. He is followed by the Thrones and Principalities of the Earth; so inscribed — Throni — Principatus. The Spirits of the Thrones bear scales in their hands; and of the Principedoms, shining globes: beneath the wings of the last of these are the four great teachers and lawgivers, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Gregory, St. Augustine, and behind St. Augustine stands his mother, watching him, her chief joy in Paradise.

Under the Thrones are set the Apostles, St. Paul separated a little from the rest, and put lowest, yet principal; under St. Paul, is St. Christopher, bearing a massive globe, with a cross upon it: but to mark him as the Christ-bearer, since here in Paradise he cannot have the child on his shoulders, Tintoret has thrown on the globe a flashing stellar reflection of the sun round the head of Christ.

All this side of the picture is kept in glowing colour — the four Doctors of the church have golden mitres and mantles; except the Cardinal, St. Jerome, who is in burning scarlet, his naked breast glowing, warm with noble life,

— the darker red of his robe relieved against a white glory.

Opposite to Michael, Gabriel flies towards the Madonna, having in his hand the Annunciation lily, large and triple-blossomed. Above him, and above Michael equally, extends a cloud of white angels, inscribed "Serafini;" but the group following Gabriel, and corresponding to the Throni following Michael, is inscribed "Cherubini." Under these are the great prophets, and singers, and fore-tellers of the happiness or of the sorrow of time. David, and Solomon, and Isaiah, and Amos of the herdsmen. David has a colossal golden psaltery laid horizontally across his knees; — two angels behind him dictate to him as he sings, looking up towards Christ; but one strong angel sweeps down to Solomon from among the cherubs, and opens a book, resting it on the head of Solomon, who looks down earnestly, unconscious of it; — to the left of David, separate from the group of prophets, as Paul from the apostles, is Moses, dark-robed; — in the full light, with-drawn far behind him, Abraham, embracing Isaac with his left arm, and near him, pale St. Agnes. In front, nearer, dark and colossal, stands the glorious figure of Santa Giustina of Padua; then a little subordinate to her, St. Catharine, and, far on the left, and high, Saint Barbara leaning on her tower. In front, nearer, flies Raphael; and under him is the four-square group of the Evangelists. Beneath them, on the left, Noah; on the right, Adam and Eve, both floating unsupported by cloud or angel; Noah buoyed by the Ark, which he holds above him, and it is *this* into which Solomon gazes down, so earnestly. Eve's face

is, perhaps, the most beautiful ever painted by Tintoret — full in light, but dark-eyed. Adam floats beside her, his figure fading into a winged gloom, edged in the outline of fig-leaves. Far down, under these, central in the lowest part of the picture, rises the Angel of the Sea, praying for Venice; for Tintoret conceives his Paradise as existing now, not as in the future. I at first mistook this soft Angel of the Sea for Magdalene, for he is sustained by other three angels on either side, as the Magdalen is, in designs of earlier time, because of the verse, "There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth." But the Magdalen is on the right, behind St. Monica; and on the same side, but lowest of all, Rachel, among the angels of her children gathered now again to her for ever.

I have no hesitation in asserting this picture to be by far the most precious work of art of any kind whatsoever, now existing in the world; and it is, I believe, on the eve of final destruction; for it is said that the angle of the great council-chamber is soon to be rebuilt; and that process will involve the destruction of the picture by removal, and, far more, by repainting. I had thought of making some effort to save it by an appeal in London to persons generally interested in the arts; but the recent desolation of Paris has familiarized us with destruction, and I have no doubt the answer to me would be, that Venice must take care of her own. But remember, at least, that I have borne witness to you to-day of the treasures that we forget, while we amuse ourselves with the poor toys, and the petty, or vile, arts, of our own time.

The years of that time have perhaps come, when we are to be taught to look no more to the dreams of painters, either for knowledge of Judgment, or of Paradise. The anger of Heaven will not longer, I think, be mocked for our amusement; and perhaps its love may not always be despised by our pride. Believe me, all the arts, and all the treasures of men, are fulfilled and preserved to them only, so far as they have chosen first, with their hearts, not the curse of God, but His blessing. Our Earth is now encumbered with ruin, our Heaven is clouded by Death. May we not wisely judge ourselves in some things now, instead of amusing ourselves with the painting of judgments to come?

*The Relation Between Michael Angelo and Tintoret* (London, 1872).

## AURORA

### (*GUIDO RENI*)

CHARLOTTE A. EATON

ON the roof of the summer-house of the Palazzo Rospigliosi, is painted the celebrated fresco of Guido's *Aurora*. Its colouring is clear, harmonious, airy, brilliant — unfaded by time; and the enthusiastic admirer of Guido's genius may be permitted to hope that this, his noblest work, will be immortal as his fame.

Morghen's fine engraving may give you some idea of the design and composition of this beautiful painting; but it cannot convey the soft harmony of the tints, the living touches, the brilliant forms, the realized dream of the imagination, that bursts, with all its magic, upon your enraptured sight in the matchless original. It is embodied poetry. The Hours, that hand-in-hand encircle the car of Phœbus, advance with rapid pace. The paler, milder forms of those gentler sisters who rule over declining day, and the glowing glance of those who bask in the meridian blaze, resplendent in the hues of heaven, — are of no mortal grace and beauty; but they are eclipsed by Aurora herself, who sails on the golden clouds before them, shedding "showers of shadowing roses" on the rejoicing earth; her celestial presence diffusing gladness, and light,



AURORA.

*Guido Reni.*

and beauty around. Above the heads of the heavenly coursers, hovers the morning star, in the form of a youthful cherub, bearing his flaming torch. Nothing is more admirable in this beautiful composition, than the motion given to the whole. The smooth and rapid step of the circling Hours as they tread on the fleecy clouds; the fiery steeds; the whirling wheels of the car; the torch of Lucifer, blown back by the velocity of his advance; and the form of Aurora, borne through the ambient air, till you almost fear she should float from your sight; all realize the illusion. You seem admitted into the world of fancy, and revel in its brightest creations.

In the midst of such youth and loveliness, the dusky figure of Phœbus appears to great disadvantage. It is not happily conceived. Yet his air is noble and godlike, and his free commanding action, and conscious ease, as he carelessly guides, with one hand, the fiery steeds that are harnessed to his flaming car, may, perhaps, compensate in some degree for his want of beauty; for he certainly is not handsome; and I looked in vain for the youthful majesty of the god of day, and thought on Apollo Belvedere. Had Guido thought of it too, he never could have made this head, which is, I think, the great and only defect of this exquisite painting; and what makes it of more importance, is, that Apollo, not Aurora, is the principal figure — the first that catches the eye, and which, in spite of our dissatisfaction, we are to the last obliged to contemplate. The defects of his Apollo are a new proof of what I have very frequently observed, that Guido succeeded far better in feminine than in masculine beauty.

His female forms, in their loveliness, their delicacy, their grace and sweetness are faultless; and the beauty and innocence of his infants have seldom been equalled; but he rarely gave to manly beauty and vigour a character that was noble.

From the *Aurora* of Guido, we must turn to the rival *Aurora* of Guercino, in the Villa Ludovisi. In spite of Guido's bad head of Apollo, and in spite of Guercino's magic chiaroscuro, I confess myself disposed to give the preference to Guido. In the first place, there is not the same unity of composition in Guercino's. It is very fine in all its parts; but still it *is* in parts. It is not so fine a *whole*, nor is it so perfect a composition, nor has it the same charm as Guido's. Neither is there the same ideal beauty in the Aurora. Guercino's is a mortal — Guido's a truly ethereal being. Guercino's Aurora is in her car, drawn by two heavenly steeds, and the shades of night seem to dissipate at her approach. Old Tithonus, whom she has left behind her seems half awake; and the morning star, under the figure of a winged genius bearing his kindled torch, follows her course. In a separate compartment, Night, in the form of a woman, is sitting musing, or slumbering, over a book. She has much of the character of a Sibyl. Her dark cave is broken open, and the blue sky and the coming light break beautifully in upon her and her companions, the sullen owl and flapping bat, which shrink from its unwelcome ray. The Hours are represented under the figure of children, fluttering about before the goddess, and extinguishing the stars of night — a beautiful idea; but one, perhaps, better adapted to poetry than

painting. The Hours of Guercino are, however, infinitely less poetic and less beautiful than the bright female forms which encircle the car of day in Guido's *Aurora*. Yet it is a masterpiece of painting; and but for the *Aurora* of Guido, we could have conceived nothing beyond the *Aurora* of Guercino.

*Rome in the Nineteenth Century* (5th edition, London, 1852).

## AURORA

### (*GUIDO RENI*)

### JOHN CONSTABLE

ALTHOUGH no distinct landscape is known by the hand of Guido, yet in a history of this particular branch it may not be improper to notice its immense importance as an accessory in his picture of *Aurora*. It is the finest instance I know of the beauty of natural landscape brought to aid a mythological story, and to be sensible of its value we have only to imagine a plain background in its stead. But though Guido has placed us in the heavens, we are looking towards the earth, where seas and mountain-tops are receiving the first beams of the morning sun. The chariot of Apollo is borne on the clouds, attended by the Hours and preceded by Aurora, who scatters flowers, and the landscape, instead of diminishing the illusion, is the chief means of producing it, and is indeed most essential to the story.

Leslie, *Life and Letters of John Constable, R. A.* (London, new ed., 1896).

## THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN

### (*TITIAN*)

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

THE pearl of the Museum at Madrid is a Raphael; that of Venice is a Titian, a marvellous canvas, forgotten and afterwards recovered, which has its legend also. For many long years Venice possessed this masterpiece without knowing it. Relegated to an old and seldom frequented church it had disappeared under a slow coating of dust and behind a network of spider-webs. The subject could scarcely be made out. One day, Count Cicognora, a great connoisseur, noticing that these rusty figures had a certain air, and scenting the master under this livery of neglect and misery, wetted his finger and rubbed the canvas, an action which is not one of exquisite propriety, but which an expert on pictures cannot help doing when he is face to face with a dirty canvas, be he twenty times a count and a thousand times a dandy. The noble picture, preserved intact under this layer of dust, like Pompeii under its mantle of ashes, appeared so young and fresh that the count never doubted but that he had discovered the canvas of a great master, an unknown *chef-d'œuvre*. He had the strength of mind to control his excitement, and proposed to the *curé* to exchange this great dilapidated painting for a beautiful picture, quite new, perfectly clean, very

brilliant, and well framed, which would do honour to the church and give pleasure to the faithful. The *curé* joyfully accepted it, smiling to himself at the eccentricity of the count, who gave new for old and demanded nothing in return.

When relieved of its dirt and stains, Titian's *Assunta* appeared radiant as the sun when it bursts through the clouds. Parisian readers may form an idea of the importance of this discovery by going to see the beautiful copy, recently made by Serrur and placed in the Beaux Arts. The *Assunta* is one of Titian's greatest works, the one in which he attains his highest flight: the composition is balanced and distributed with infinite art. The upper portion, which is arched, represents Paradise, Glory, as the Spanish say in their ascetic language: garlands of angels floating and submerged in a wave of light of uncalculable depth, stars scintillating in the flame, and brighter glints of the everlasting light form the aureole of the Father, who arrives from the depths of the infinite with the action of a hovering eagle, accompanied by an archangel and a seraph whose hands support the crown and the nimbus.

This Jehovah, like a divine bird appearing head-foremost and with body horizontally foreshortened beneath a wave of drapery flying open like wings, astonishes us by its sublime boldness; if it is possible for the brush of a human being to give a countenance to divinity, certainly Titian has succeeded. Unlimited power and imperishable youth radiate from that white-bearded face that need only nod for the snows of eternity to fall: not since the Olympian Jove of Phidias has the lord of heaven and earth been represented more worthily.



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THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN.

*Titian.*

The centre of the picture is occupied by the Virgin Mary, who is lifted up, or rather who is surrounded by a wreath of angels and souls of the blessed: for she has no need of any aid to mount to Heaven; she rises by the springing upward of her robust faith, by the purity of her soul, which is lighter than the most luminous ether. Truly there is in this figure an unheard-of force of ascension, and in order to obtain this effect Titian has not had recourse to slender forms, diaphanous draperies, and transparent colours. His Madonna is a very true, very living, and very real woman, with a beauty as solid as that of the Venus de Milo, or the sleeping woman in the Tribune of Florence. Large, full drapery flows about her in numerous folds; her flanks are wide enough to have contained a God, and, if she was not on a cloud, the Marquis du Guast might have put his hand on her beautiful bosom, as in the picture in our Museum. Yet nothing is of more celestial beauty than this great and strong figure in its rose-coloured tunic and azure mantle; notwithstanding the powerful voluptuousness of the body, the radiant glance is of the purest virginity.

At the base of the picture, the apostles are grouped in happily-contrasted attitudes of rapture and surprise. Two or three little angels, who link them to the intermediary zone of the composition, seem to be explaining to them the miracle that is taking place. The heads of the apostles, who are of various ages and characters, are painted with a surprising force of vitality and reality. The draperies are of that fullness and abundant flow that characterize Titian as the richest and at the same time the simplest of all painters.

In studying this Virgin and mentally comparing her with other Virgins of different masters, we reflected what a marvellous and ever new thing is art. What Catholic painting has embroidered with variations upon this theme of the Madonna, without ever exhausting it, astonishes and confuses the imagination; but, in reflecting, we comprehend that under the conventional type each painter conveyed secretly, at the same time, his dream of love and the personification of his talent.

The Madonna of Albrecht Dürer in her sad and somewhat constrained gracefulness, with her tired features, interesting rather than beautiful, her air of a matron rather than a Virgin, her German and *bourgeoise* frankness, her tight garments and her symmetrically broken folds, almost always accompanied by a rabbit, an owl, or an ape, through some vague memory of Germanic pantheism, may she not be the woman whom he would have loved and preferred to all others, and does she not also exceedingly well represent the very genius of the artist? As she is his Madonna, she might easily be his Muse.

The same resemblance exists in Raphael. The type of his Madonna, in whom, mingled with old memories, the features of the Fornarina are always found, sometimes suggested, sometimes copied, most frequently idealized, is she not the most perfect symbol of his talent, — elegant, graceful, and penetrated throughout with a chaste voluptuousness? The Christian nourished on Plato and Greek Art, the friend of Leo X., the dilettante Pope, the artist who died of love while painting the *Transfiguration*, did he not live entirely in these modest Venuses holding on their

knees a child who is Love? If we wished to symbolize the genius of every painter in an allegorical picture, would it be any other than the angel of Urbino?

The Virgin of the *Assunta*, big, strong, highly-coloured, with her robust and healthful grace, her fine bearing, and her simple and natural beauty, — is she not Titian's painting with all its qualities? We might carry our researches still further; but we have said enough as a suggestion.

Thanks to the dusty shroud which covered it for so long, the *Assunta* glows with a quite youthful brilliancy; the centuries have not elapsed for it, and we enjoy the supreme pleasure of seeing a picture of Titian's just as it came fresh from his palette.

*Voyage en Italie* (new ed., Paris, 1884).

## THE NIGHT WATCH

### (*REMBRANDT*)

EUGÈNE FROMENTIN

WE know how the *Night Watch* is hung. It faces the *Banquet of Arquebusiers* by Van der Helst, and, no matter what has been said, the two pictures do not hurt each other. They oppose each other like day and night, like the transfiguration of things and their literal imitation, slightly vulgar and clever. Admit that they are as perfect as they are celebrated and you will have before your eyes a unique antithesis, what La Bruyère calls "opposition truths that illuminate one another."

I shall not astonish anyone in saying that the *Night Watch* possesses no charm, and the fact is without example among the fine works of pictorial art. It is amazing, it is disconcerting, it is imposing, but it absolutely lacks that insinuating quality that convinces us, and it almost always fails to please us at first. In the first place, it shocks our logical sense and that habitual visual rectitude that loves clear forms, lucid ideas, and clearly formulated boldness; something warns us that our imagination as well as our reason will be only half satisfied and that even the mind that is most easily won over will not submit till the last and will not surrender without dispute. This is due to various causes that do not all arise from the picture, — the light is



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The Night Watch.

*Rembrandt.*

detestable; the frame of dark wood in which the painting is drowned spoils its middle values, and its bronze scale of colour, and its force, and makes it look much more smoked than it is; and, lastly and above all, the exigencies of the place prevent the picture from being hung at the proper height, and, against all the laws of the most elementary perspective, oblige you to look at it from the same level.

You are aware that the *Night Watch*, rightly or wrongly, passes for an almost incomprehensible work, and that constitutes its chief prestige. Perhaps it would have made far less noise in the world, if for two centuries people had not kept up the habit of trying to find out its meaning instead of examining its merits, and persisted in the mania of regarding it as a picture enigmatical above all.

Taking it literally, what we know of the subject seems to me sufficient. In the first place, we know the names and quality of the personages, thanks to the care with which the painter has inscribed them on a plate at the bottom of the picture; which proves that if the painter's fancy has transfigured many things, the chief idea at least deals with the customs of local life. It is true that we cannot tell for what purpose these men are going out armed, whether they are going to practise shooting, or on parade, or what; but, as there is no matter here for the deeper mysteries, I am persuaded that if Rembrandt has failed to be more explicit it is because either he did not wish or he did not know how to be, and there is a whole series of hypotheses that might be very simply explained by some such matter as inability or intentional reticence. As for the time of day (the most vexed question of all and the

only one, moreover, that could have been settled when first it arose), for fixing that we have no need to discover that the Captain's outstretched arm casts a shadow upon the skirt of his coat. It suffices to remember that Rembrandt never treated light otherwise; that nocturnal obscurity is his habit; that shadow is the ordinary form of his poetic feeling and his usual means of dramatic expression; and that in his portraits, in his interiors, in his legends, in his anecdotes, in his landscapes, and in his etchings, as in his paintings, it is generally with night that he makes day.

It is agreed that the composition does not constitute the principal merit of the picture. The subject had not been selected by the painter, and the manner in which he intended to treat it did not allow of its first sketch being very spontaneous, nor very lucid. Therefore the scene is indecisive, the action almost null, and, consequently, the interest is greatly divided. From the very beginning is betrayed an inherent vice in the first idea, and a kind of irresolution in the manner of conceiving, distributing, and placing it. Some men marching, others standing still, one priming his musket, another loading his, another firing, a drummer who poses for the head while beating his instrument, a somewhat theatrical standard-bearer, and, finally, a crowd of figures fixed in the requisite immobility of portraits, — so far as action is concerned, these, if I am not mistaken, are the sole picturesque features of the painting.

Is this indeed sufficient to give it the facial, anecdotal, and local feeling that we expect from Rembrandt when he paints the places, things, and men of his time? If Van der Helst instead of seating his arquebusiers had made them

move in any manner whatever, do not doubt that he would have given us the truest if not the finest indications of their ways. And as for Frans Hals, you may imagine with what clearness and order, and how naturally he would have disposed the scene; how piquant, lively, ingenious, abundant, and magnificent he would have been. The idea conceived by Rembrandt then is one of the most ordinary, and I would venture to say that the majority of his contemporaries considered it poor in resources; some because its abstract line is uncertain, scanty, symmetrical, meagre, and singularly incoherent; others, the colourists, because this composition, so full of gaps and ill-occupied spaces, did not lend itself to that broad and generous employment of colours which is usual with able palettes. . . .

Thus there is no truth and very little pictorial invention in the general disposition. Is there more in the individual figures?

What immediately strikes us is that they are unreasonably disproportioned and that many of them have shortcomings and so to speak an embarrassment of characterization that nothing can justify. The captain is too big and the lieutenant too small, not only by the side of Captain Kock, whose stature crushes him, but also beside accessory figures whose height or breadth gives this somewhat plain young man the air of a youth who has grown a moustache too soon. Regarding the two as portraits, they are scarcely successful ones of doubtful likeness and thankless physiognomy, which is surprising in a portrait-painter who had made his mark in 1642, and which affords some excuse for Captain Kock's having a little later

applied to the infallible Van der Helst. Is the guard loading his musket rendered any better? Moreover, what do you think of his right-hand neighbour, and of the drummer? One might say that all these portraits lack hands, so vaguely are they sketched and so insignificant is their action. It follows that what they hold is also ill rendered: muskets, halberds, drum-sticks, canes, lances, and flag-pole; and that the gesture of an arm is impotent when the hand that ought to act does not do so clearly, quickly, or with energy, precision, or intelligence. I will not speak of the feet, which, in most cases, are lost in shadow. Such in reality are the necessities of the system of envelopment adopted by Rembrandt, and such is the imperious foregone conclusion of his method, that one general dark cloud invades the base of the picture and that the forms float in it to the great detriment of their points of support.

Must we add that the clothes are very similar to the likenesses, sometimes uncouth and unnatural, sometimes rigid and rebellious to the lines of the body? One would say that they are not worn properly. The helmets are stupidly put on, the hats are outlandish and ungracefully worn. The scarfs are in their place and yet they are awkwardly tied. Here is none of that unique ease of carriage, that natural elegance, that *négligé* dress, caught and rendered to the life in which Frans Hals knows how to attire every age, every stature, every stage of corpulence, and, certainly also, every rank. We are not reassured on this point more than on many others. We ask ourselves whether there is not here a laborious fantasy, like an attempt to be strange, which is not at all pleasing or striking.

Some of the heads are very handsome, I have mentioned those that are not. The best, the only ones in which the hand of the master and the feeling of a master are to be recognized, are those which, from the depths of the canvas, shoot their vague eyes and the fine spark of their mobile glances at you; do not severely examine their construction, nor their plan, nor their bony structure; accustom yourself to the greyish pallor of their complexion, question them from afar as they also look at you from a distance, and if you want to know how they live, look at them as Rembrandt wants us to look at his human effigies, attentively and long, at their lips and eyes.

There remains an episodical figure which has hitherto baffled all conjectures, because it seems by its traits, its carriage, its odd splendour, and its inappropriateness, to personify the magic, the romantic feeling, or, if you prefer, the misrepresentation of the picture; I mean that little witch-like personage, child-like and crone-like at the same time, with her hair streaming and adorned with pearls, gliding among the guards for no apparent reason, and who, a not less inexplicable detail, has a white cock, that at need might be taken for a purse, hanging from her girdle.

Whatever right she has to join the troop, this little figure seems to have nothing human about her. She is colourless and almost shapeless. Her figure is that of a doll and her gait is automatic. She has the air of a beggar, something like diamonds covers her whole body, and an accoutrement resembling rays. You would say that she came from some jewry, or old clothes market, or Bohemia, and that, awaking from a dream, she had attired herself in

the most singular of all worlds. She has the light, the uncertainty, and the wavering of a pale fire. The more we examine her, the less we can grasp the subtle lineaments that serve as envelope for her uncorporeal existence. We end by seeing in her nothing but a kind of extraordinarily strange phosphorescence which is not the ordinary light of things, nor yet the ordinary brilliance of a well-regulated palette, and this adds more sorcery to the peculiarities of her countenance. Notice that in the place she occupies, one of the dark corners of the canvas, rather low in the middle distance, between a man in deep red and the captain dressed in black, this eccentric light has much greater force than the most sudden contrast with a neighbouring tint, and without extreme care this explosion of accidental light would have sufficed to disorganize the whole picture.

What is the meaning of this little imaginary or real being, who, however, is only a supernumerary while yet holding, so to speak, the chief rôle? I shall not attempt to tell you. Abler people than I have allowed themselves to inquire what it was and what it was doing there, without coming to any satisfactory conclusion.

But if to all these somewhat vain questions Rembrandt replied: "This child is a caprice no less strange than and quite as plausible as many others in my engraving or painting. I have placed it as a narrow ray amid great masses of shadow because its exiguity rendered it more vibrating and it suited me to awaken with a ray one of the dark corners of my picture. It also wears the usual costume of my female figures, great or small, young or old, and in it you will find the type frequently occurring in my works. I

love what glitters, and that is why I have clothed her in brilliant materials. As for those phosphorescent gleams that astonish you here, whilst elsewhere they pass unnoticed, it is only the light in its colourless splendour and supernatural quality that I habitually give to my figures when I illuminate them at all strongly." — Do you not think that such a reply ought to satisfy the most difficult, and that finally, the rights of the stage-setter being reserved, he need only render account of one point: the manner in which he has treated the picture?

We know what to think of the effect produced by the *Night Watch* when it appeared in 1642. This memorable attempt was neither understood nor relished. It added noise to Rembrandt's glory, increased it in the eyes of his faithful admirers, and compromised it in the eyes of those who had only followed him with some effort and attended him to this decisive point. It made him a painter more peculiar and a master less sure. It heated and divided men of taste according to the heat of their blood, or the stiffness of their reason. In short, it was regarded as an absolutely new but dangerous adventure which brought him applause and some blame, and which at heart did not convince anybody. If you know the judgment expressed on this subject by Rembrandt's contemporaries, his friends and his pupils, you know that opinion has not sensibly varied for two centuries, and that we repeat almost the same thing that this great daring man might have heard during his lifetime. . . .

Save one or two frank colours, two reds and a deep violet, except one or two flashes of blue, you cannot perceive anything in this colourless and violent canvas to

recall the palette and ordinary method of any of the known colourists. The heads have the appearance rather than the colouring proper to life. They are red, purple, or pale, without for all that having the true paleness Velasquez gives to his faces, or those sanguine, yellowish, greyish, or purplish shades that Frans Hals renders with such skill when he desires to specify the temperaments of his personages. In the clothes and hair and various parts of the accoutrements, the colour is no more exact nor expressive than is, as I have said, the form itself. When a red appears, it is not of a delicate nature and it indistinctly expresses silk, cloth, or satin. The guard loading his musket is clothed in red from head to foot, from his hat to his boots. Do you perceive that Rembrandt has occupied himself for a moment with the varied physiognomy of this red, its nature or substance, as a true colourist would not have failed to do? . . .

I defy any one to tell me how the lieutenant is dressed and in what colour. Is it white tinged with yellow? Is it yellow faded to white? The truth is that this personage having to express the central light of the picture, Rembrandt has clothed him with light, very ably with regard to brilliance and very negligently with regard to colour.

Now, and it is here that Rembrandt begins to show himself, for a colourist there is no light in the abstract. Light of itself is nothing: it is the result of colours diversely illumined and diversely radiating in accordance with the nature of the ray that they transmit or absorb. One very deep tint may be extraordinarily luminous; another very

light one on the contrary may not be at all luminous. There is not a student in the schools who does not know that. With the colourists, then, the light depends exclusively upon the choice of the colours employed to render it and is so intimately connected with the tone that we may truthfully say that with them light and colour are one. In the *Night Watch* there is nothing of the kind. Tone disappears in light as it does in shade. The shade is blackish, the light whitish. Everything is brilliant or dull, radiant or obscure, by an alternative effacement of the colouring principle. Here we have different values rather than contrasted tones. And this is so true that a fine engraving, a good drawing, a Mouilleron lithograph, or a photograph will give an exact idea of the picture in its important effects, and a copy simply in gradations from light to dark would destroy none of its arabesque.

What is his execution in the picture before us? Does he treat a stuff well? No. Does he express it ingeniously, or with liveliness, with its seams, folds, breaks, and tissue. Assuredly not. When he places a feather at the brim of a hat, does he give it the lightness and floating grace that we see in Van Dyck, or Hals, or Velasquez? Does he indicate by a little gloss on a dead ground, in their form, or feeling of the body, the human physiognomy of a well adjusted coat, rubbed by a movement or worn with use? Can he, with a few masterly touches and taking no more trouble than things are worth, indicate lace-work, or suggest jewellery, or rich embroidery?

In the *Night Watch* we have swords, muskets, partisans, polished casques, damascened cuirasses, high boots, tied

shoes, a halberd with its fluttering blue silk, a drum, and lances. Imagine with what ease, with what carelessness, and with what a nimble way of making us believe in things without insisting upon them, Rubens, Veronese, Van Dyck, Titian himself, and lastly Frans Hals, that matchless workman, would have summarily indicated and superbly carried off all these accessories. Do you maintain in good faith that Rembrandt in the *Night Watch* excels in treating them thus? I pray you, look at the halberd that the little lieutenant Ruijtenberg holds at the end of his stiff arm; look at the foreshortened steel, look especially at the floating silk, and tell me if an artist of that value has ever allowed himself more pitifully to express an object that ought to spring forth beneath his brush without his being aware of it. Look at the slashed sleeves that have been so highly praised, the ruffles, the gloves; examine the hands! Consider well how in their affected or unaffected negligence their form is accentuated and their foreshortening is expressed. The touch is thick, embarrassed, awkward, and blundering. We might truly say that it goes astray, and that applied crosswise when it should be applied lengthwise, made flat when any other than he would have rounded it, it confuses instead of determining the form. . . .

At length I come to the incontestable interest of the picture, to Rembrandt's great effort in a new field: I am going to speak of the application on a large scale of that way of looking at things which is proper to him and which is called chiaroscuro.

No mistake is possible here. What people attribute to

Rembrandt is really his. Without any doubt chiaroscuro is the native and necessary form of his impressions and ideas. Others have made use of it; but nobody has employed it so constantly and ingeniously as he. It is the supremely mysterious form, the most enveloped, the most elliptic, and the richest in hidden meanings and surprises that exists in the pictorial language of the painter. In this sense it is more than any other the form of intimate feelings or ideas. It is light, vaporous, veiled, discreet; it lends its charm to hidden things, invites curiosity, adds an attraction to moral beauties, and gives a grace to the speculations of conscience. In short, it partakes of sentiment, emotion, uncertainty, indefiniteness, and infinity; of dreams and of the ideal. And this is why it is, as it ought to be, the poetic and natural atmosphere in which Rembrandt's genius never ceased to dwell.

In very ordinary language and in its action common to all schools, chiaroscuro is the art of rendering the atmosphere visible, and painting an object enveloped with air. Its aim is to render all the picturesque accidents of shadow, of half-tints, of light, of relief, and of distance; and to give in consequence more variety, more unity of effect, more caprice and more relative truth either to forms or to colours. The contrary is a more ingenuous and more abstract acceptation, by virtue of which objects are shown as they are, viewed close at hand, the atmosphere being suppressed, and consequently without any other than linear perspective, which results from the diminishing of objects and from their relation to the horizon. When we speak of aërial perspective, we already presuppose a little chiaroscuro.

Any other than Rembrandt, in the Dutch school, might sometimes make us forget that he was obeying the fixed laws of chiaroscuro; with him this forgetfulness is impossible: he has so to speak framed, co-ordinated and promulgated its code, and if we might believe him a *doctrinaire* at this moment of his career, when instinct swayed him much more than reflection, the *Night Watch* would have a redoubled interest, for it would assume the character and the authority of a manifesto.

To envelop and immerse everything in a bath of shadow; to plunge light itself into it only to withdraw it afterwards to make it appear more distant and radiant; to make dark waves revolve around illuminated centres, grading them, sounding them, thickening them; to make the obscurity nevertheless transparent, the half gloom easy to pierce, and finally to give a kind of permeability to the strongest colours that prevents their becoming blackness, — this is the prime condition, and these also are the difficulties of this very special art. It goes without saying, that if anyone ever excelled in this, it was Rembrandt. He did not invent, he perfected everything; and the method that he used oftener and better than anyone else bears his name.

When explained according to this tendency of the painter to express a subject only by the brilliance and obscurity of objects, the *Night Watch* has, so to speak, no more secrets for us. Everything that might have made us hesitate is made clear. Its qualities have their *raison d'être;* and we even come to comprehend its errors. The embarrassment of the practitioner as he executes, of the designer as he constructs, of the painter as he colours, of the costumer as

he attires, the inconsistency of the tone, the amphibology of the effect, the uncertainty of the time of day, the strangeness of the figures, their flashing apparition in deep shadow, — all this results here by chance from an effect conceived contrary to probability, and pursued in spite of all logic, not at all necessary, and with the following purpose: to illuminate a real scene with unreal light, that is to say, to clothe a fact with the ideal character of a vision. Do not seek for anything beyond this audacious project that mocked the painter's aims, clashed with received ideas, set up a system in opposition to customs, and boldness of spirit in opposition to manual dexterity; and the temerity of which certainly did not cease to spur him on until the day when I believe insurmountable difficulties revealed themselves, for, if Rembrandt resolved some of them, there are many that he could not resolve.

*Maîtres d'Autrefois* (Paris, 1876).

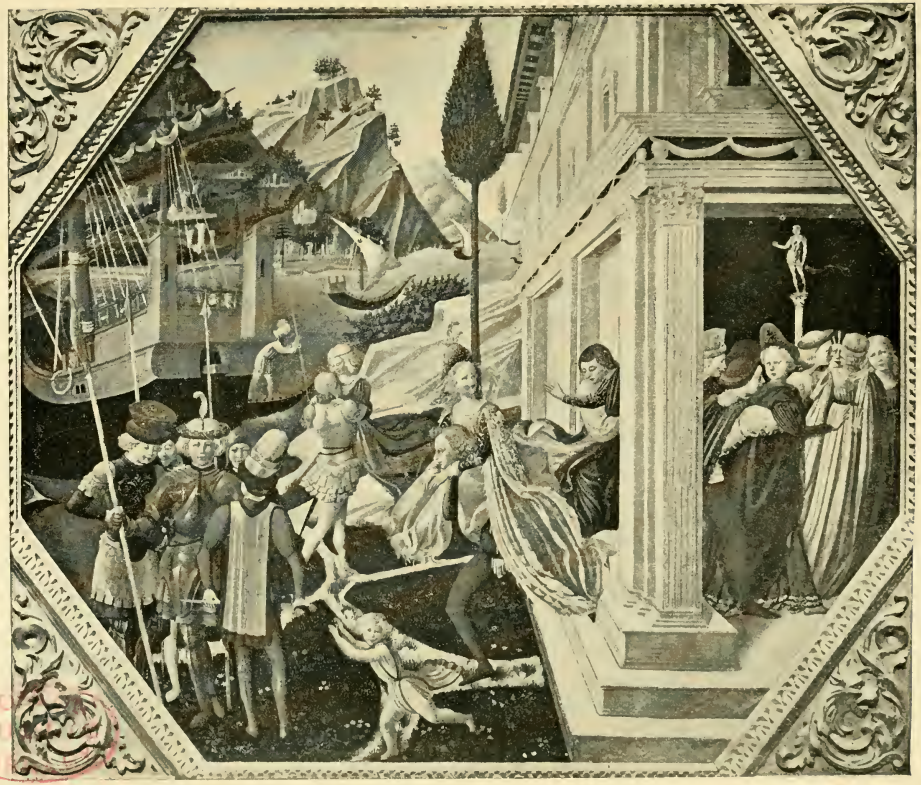
## THE RAPE OF HELEN

### (*BENOZZO GOZZOLI*)

COSMO MONKHOUSE

THOUGH the patronage of art had shifted partly from the Church to the great magnates, especially the great commercial princes like the Medici at Florence, her influence was still paramount, and though secular subjects were not uncommon, the vast majority of paintings executed for patrons, whether clerical or lay, were still religious in subject. It is not therefore, surprising that among the artists of the Fifteenth Century, many of whom were monks and all Church painters, we find a distinct cleavage dividing artists whose aim was to break away from all traditions — realists — classicists — in a word, reformers, from artists who clung tenaciously to the old ideals, and whose main aim was still the perfection of devotional expression.

It was to the former class that Benozzo Gozzoli belonged, pupil though he was of Fra Angelico. Although his special quality may be partly discerned in the altar-piece that hangs above his master's *predella*, in the strongly marked character of the saints, and perhaps more in the carefully studied goldfinches, there was little scope in such a subject for the exercise of his imagination or the display of his individuality. It is different with the little panel opposite,



THE RAPE OF HELEN.

*Gozzoli.*

*The Rape of Helen* (No. 591), in which he has depicted with great liveliness and gusto a scene from a classical legend. Possibly, to Fra Angelico, who regarded painting only as a means of edification, its employment on such a subject may have seemed little less than sacrilege, not unlike the use of a chancel for the stabling of horses. Such views can scarcely be said to be extinct now, and this is the more remarkable as no one has the same feeling with regard to the other arts, such as sculpture or poetry. To a young man like Benozzo, and many others of his day, not monks, nor specially devout in disposition, it must, nevertheless, have been a change which was welcome. To paint the *Virgin enthroned with Saints* over and over again, must have been a little wearisome to men conscious of a fancy to which they could give no scope except by putting S. Jerome's hat in a new place, or introducing a couple of goldfinches. One likes to think of the pleasure with which Gozzoli received his commission one morning, perhaps from Cosimo de' Medici himself, for whom his master was adorning a cell in the Convent of San Marco, recently rebuilt at the great man's expense. Did he know the legend of Helen of Troy, or had he to seek the advice of some scholar like Nicolli or Poggio for the right tradition? He seems, indeed, to have been rather mixed in his ideas on the subject. Did he consult Brunellesco in the construction of his Greek Temple, or Donatello or Ghiberti for the statue inside? Whence came that wonderful landscape with its mountains and cypress trees and strange-shaped ships? From his imagination, or from some old missal or choir-book illumination? At all events, pleasure

evidently went to the making of it, for his fancy had full scope. His costumes he adopted frankly from those of his day, adding some features in the way of strange headgear, much like those in Fra Angelico's *Adoration* (in which he possibly had a hand), to give an Eastern colour to the group of boyish heroes on the left; not knowing or considering that the robes in which he was accustomed to drape his angels were much nearer to, were indeed derived from, the costume of the Greeks. For his ideal of female beauty he seems to have been satisfied with his own taste. One can scarcely imagine a face or figure much less classical than that of the blonde with the *retroussé* nose (presumably Helen herself), who is riding so complacently on the neck of the long-legged Italian in the centre. The figures in the Temple are of a finer type, and the lady in the sweeping robe, with the long sleeves, who turns her back to us, has a simple dignity which reminds one less of Gozzoli's master than of Lippo Lippi or Masaccio, whose frescoes in the Carmine he, in common with all other artists, had doubtless studied. There is nothing so classical or so natural in the picture as the beautiful little bare-legged boy that is running away in the foreground. This little bright panel — so gay, so naïve, so ignorant, and withal so charming — is of importance in the history of art as illustrated in the National Gallery. It is the first in which the artist has given full play to his imagination, and entered the romantic world of classic legend, and, with one exception, the first which is purely secular in subject, and was designed for a "secular" purpose. It probably once formed part of a marriage-chest. The important share

which the landscape has in the composition, and its serious attempt at perspective, are also worthy of note. As an example of the master himself, of the painter of the great panoramic procession of the notables of his day, which under the title of the *Adoration of the Kings*, covers the walls of the chapel in the Medici Palace at Florence, of the designs of the history of S. Agostino at San Gemignano, and of the frescoes in Campo Santo at Pisa, it is of course extremely inadequate, but it suffices to indicate many paths which the young artist was to strike out from the old track which sufficed for his saint-like master.

*In the National Gallery* (London, 1895).

## MONNA LISA[1]

### (*LEONARDO DA VINCI*)

WALTER PATER

IN Vasari's life of Leonardo da Vinci as we now read it there are some variations from the first edition. There, the painter who has fixed the outward type of Christ for succeeding centuries was a bold speculator, holding lightly by other men's beliefs, setting philosophy above Christianity. Words of his, trenchant enough to justify this impression, are not recorded, and would have been out of keeping with a genius of which one characteristic is the tendency to lose itself in a refined and graceful mystery. The suspicion was but the time-honoured form in which the world stamps its appreciation of one who has thoughts for himself alone, his high indifferentism, his intolerance of the common forms of things; and in the second edition the image was changed into something fainter and more conventional. But it is still by a certain mystery in his work, and something enigmatical beyond the usual measure of great men, that he fascinates, or perhaps half repels. His life is one of sudden revolts, with intervals in which he works not at all, or apart from the main scope of his work. By a strange fortune the works on which his more popular fame rested disappeared early from the world, as the *Battle of the Standard;* or are mixed obscurely with

[1] The spelling commonly used is "Mona Lisa." The editor has thought best, however, to keep the form of spelling used by Walter Pater.



Monna Lisa.
*L. da Vinci.*

the work of meaner hands, as the *Last Supper*. His type of beauty is so exotic that it fascinates a larger number than it delights, and seems more than that of any other artist to reflect ideas and views and some scheme of the world within; so that he seemed to his contemporaries to be the possessor of some unsanctified and secret wisdom; as to Michelet and others to have anticipated modern ideas. He trifles with his genius, and crowds all his chief work into a few tormented years of later life; yet he is so possessed by his genius that he passes unmoved through the most tragic events, overwhelming his country and friends, like one who comes across them by chance on some secret errand. . . .

His art, if it was to be something in the world, must be weighted with more of the meaning of nature and purpose of humanity. Nature was "the true mistress of higher intelligences." So he plunged into the study of nature. And in doing this he followed the manner of the older students; he brooded over the hidden virtues of plants and crystals, the lines traced by stars as they moved in the sky, over the correspondences which exist between the different orders of living things, through which, to eyes opened, they interpret each other; and for years he seemed to those about him as one listening to a voice silent for other men.

He learned here the art of going deep, of tracking the sources of expression to their subtlest retreats, the power of an intimate presence in the things he handled. He did not at once or entirely desert his art; only he was no longer the cheerful objective painter, through whose soul, as

through clear glass, the bright figures of Florentine life, only made a little mellower and more pensive by the transit, passed on to the white wall. He wasted many days in curious tricks of design, seeming to lose himself in the spinning of intricate devices of lines and colours. He was smitten with a love of the impossible — the perforation of mountains, changing the course of rivers, raising great buildings, such as the church of San Giovanni, in the air; all those feats for the performance of which natural magic professes to have the key. Later writers, indeed, see in these efforts an anticipation of modern mechanics; in him they were rather dreams, thrown off by the overwrought and labouring brain. Two ideas were especially fixed in him, as reflexes of things that had touched his brain in childhood beyond the measure of other impressions — the smiling of women and the motion of great waters. . . .

The science of that age was all divination, clairvoyance, unsubjected to our exact modern formulas, seeking in an instant of vision to concentrate a thousand experiences. Later writers, thinking only of the well-ordered treatise on painting which a Frenchman, Raffaelle du Fresne, a hundred years afterwards, compiled from Leonardo's bewildered manuscripts, written strangely as his manner was, from right to left, have imagined a rigid order in his inquiries. But this rigid order was little in accordance with the restlessness of his character; and if we think of him as the mere reasoner who subjects design to anatomy, and composition to mathematical rules, we shall hardly have of him that impression which those about him received from him.

Poring over his crucibles, making experiments with colour, trying by a strange variation of the alchemist's dream to discover the secret, not of an elixir to make man's natural life immortal, but rather giving immortality to the subtlest and most delicate effects of painting, he seemed to them rather the sorcerer or the magician, possessed of curious secrets and a hidden knowledge, living in a world of which he alone possessed the key. What his philosophy seems to have been most like is that of Paracelsus or Cardan; and much of the spirit of the older alchemy still hangs about it, with its confidence in short cuts and odd byways to knowledge. To him philosophy was to be something giving strange swiftness and double sight, divining the sources of springs beneath the earth or of expression beneath the human countenance, clairvoyant of occult gifts in common or uncommon things, in the reed at the brook-side or the star which draws near to us but once in a century. How in this way the clear purpose was overclouded, the fine chaser's head perplexed, we but dimly see; the mystery which at no point quite lifts from Leonardo's life is deepest here. But it is certain that at one period of his life he had almost ceased to be an artist.

The year 1483 — the year of the birth of Raffaelle and the thirty-first of Leonardo's life — is fixed as the date of his visit to Milan by the letter in which he recommends himself to Ludovico Sforza, and offers to tell him for a price strange secrets in the art of war. It was that Sforza who murdered his young nephew by slow poison, yet was so susceptible to religious impressions that he turned his worst passions into a kind of religious cultus, and who took

for his device the mulberry tree — symbol, in its long delay and sudden yielding of flowers and fruit together, of a wisdom which economizes all forces for an opportunity of sudden and sure effect. The fame of Leonardo had gone before him, and he was to model a colossal statue of Francesco, the first duke. As for Leonardo himself he came not as an artist at all, or careful of the fame of one; but as a player on the harp, a strange harp of silver of his own construction, shaped in some curious likeness to a horse's skull. The capricious spirit of Ludovico was susceptible to the charm of music, and Leonardo's nature had a kind of spell in it. Fascination is always the word descriptive of him. No portrait of his youth remains; but all tends to make us believe that up to this time some charm of voice and aspect, strong enough to balance the disadvantage of his birth, had played about him. His physical strength was great; it was said that he could bend a horseshoe like a coil of lead.

The Duomo, the work of artists from beyond the Alps, so fantastic to a Florentine used to the mellow unbroken surfaces of Giotto and Arnolfo, was then in all its freshness; and below, in the streets of Milan, moved a people as fantastic, changeful, and dreamlike. To Leonardo least of all men could there be anything poisonous in the exotic flowers of sentiment which grew there. It was a life of exquisite amusements, (Leonardo became a celebrated designer of pageants,) and brilliant sins; and it suited the quality of his genius, composed in almost equal parts of curiosity and the desire of beauty, to take things as they came.

Curiosity and the desire of beauty — these are the two elementary forces in Leonardo's genius; curiosity often in conflict with the desire of beauty, but generating, in union with it, a type of subtle and curious grace.

The movement of the Fifteenth Century was two-fold: partly the Renaissance, partly also the coming of what is called the "modern spirit," with its realism, its appeal to experience; it comprehended a return to antiquity, and a return to nature. Raffaelle represents the return to antiquity, and Leonardo the return to nature. In this return to nature he was seeking to satisfy a boundless curiosity by her perpetual surprises, a microscopic sense of finish by her finesse, or delicacy of operation, that *subtilitas naturæ* which Bacon notices. So we find him often in intimate relations with men of science, with Fra Luca Paccioli the mathematician, and the anatomist Marc Antonio della Torre. His observations and experiments fill thirteen volumes of manuscript; and those who can judge describe him as anticipating long before, by rapid intuition, the later ideas of science. He explained the obscure light of the unilluminated part of the moon, knew that the sea had once covered the mountains which contain shells, and the gatherings of the equatorial waters above the polar.

He who thus penetrated into the most secret parts of nature preferred always the more to the less remote, what, seeming exceptional, was an instance of law more refined, the construction about things of a peculiar atmosphere and mixed lights. He paints flowers with such curious fidelity that different writers have attributed to him a fondness for particular flowers, as Clement the cyclamen, and Rio the

jasmine; while at Venice there is a stray leaf from his portfolio dotted all over with studies of violets and the wild rose. In him first, appears the taste for what is *bizarre* or *recherché* in landscape: hollow places full of the green shadow of bituminous rocks, ridged reefs of trap-rock which cut the water into quaint sheets of light — their exact antitype is in our own western seas; all solemn effects of moving water; you may follow it springing from its distant source among the rocks on the heath of the *Madonna of the Balances,* passing as a little fall into the treacherous calm of the *Madonna of the Lake*, next, as a goodly river below the cliffs of the *Madonna of the Rocks*, washing the white walls of its distant villages, stealing out in a network of divided streams in *La Gioconda*, to the sea-shore of the *Saint Anne* — that delicate place, where the wind passes like the hand of some fine etcher over the surface, and the untorn shells lie thick upon the sand, and the tops of the rocks, to which the waves never rise, are green with grass grown fine as hair. It is the landscape, not of dreams or fancy, but of places far withdrawn, and hours selected from a thousand with a miracle of finesse. Through his strange veil of sight things reach him so; in no ordinary night or day, but as in faint light of eclipse, or in some brief interval of falling rain at daybreak, or through deep water.

And not into nature only; but he plunged also into human personality, and became above all a painter of portraits; faces of a modelling more skilful than has been seen before or since, embodied with a reality which almost amounts to illusion on dark air. To take a character as it

was, and delicately sound its stops, suited one so curious in observation, curious in invention. So he painted the portraits of Ludovico's mistresses, Lucretia Crivelli and Cecilia Galerani the poetess, of Ludovico himself, and the Duchess Beatrice. The portrait of Cecilia Galerani is lost, but that of Lucretia Crivelli has been identified with *La Belle Ferronnière* of the Louvre, and Ludovico's pale, anxious face still remains in the Ambrosian. Opposite is the portrait of Beatrice d'Este, in whom Leonardo seems to have caught some presentiment of early death, painting her precise and grave, full of the refinement of the dead, in sad earth-coloured raiment, set with pale stones. . . .

The *Last Supper* was finished in 1497; in 1498 the French entered Milan, and whether or not the Gascon bowmen used it as a mark for their arrows, the model of Francesco Sforza certainly did not survive. Ludovico became a prisoner, and the remaining years of Leonardo's life are more or less years of wandering. From his brilliant life at court he had saved nothing, and he returned to Florence a poor man. Perhaps necessity kept his spirit excited: the next four years are one prolonged rapture or ecstasy of invention. He painted the pictures of the Louvre, his most authentic works, which came there straight from the cabinet of Francis the First, at Fontainebleau. One picture of his, the *Saint Anne* — not the *Saint Anne* of the Louvre, but a mere cartoon now in London — revived for a moment a sort of appreciation more common in an earlier time, when good pictures had still seemed miraculous; and for two days a crowd of people of all qualities passed in naïve excitement through

the chamber where it hung, and gave Leonardo a taste of Cimabue's triumph. But his work was less with the saints than with the living women of Florence; for he lived still in the polished society that he loved, and in the houses of Florence, left perhaps a little subject to light thoughts by the death of Savonarola (the latest gossip is of an undraped Monna Lisa, found in some out-of-the-way corner of the late Orleans collection), he saw Ginevra di Benci, and Lisa, the young third wife of Francesco del Giocondo. As we have seen him using incidents of the sacred legend, not for their own sake, or as mere subjects for pictorial realisation, but as a symbolical language for fancies all his own, so now he found a vent for his thoughts in taking one of those languid women, and raising her, as Leda or Pomona, Modesty or Vanity, to the seventh heaven of symbolical expression.

*La Gioconda* is, in the truest sense, Leonardo's masterpiece, the revealing instance of his mode of thought and work. In suggestiveness, only the *Melancholia* of Dürer is comparable to it; and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery. We all know the face and hands of the figure, set in the marble chair, in that cirque of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea. Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it least.[1] As often happens with works in which invention seems to reach its limit, there is an element in it given to, not invented by, the master. In that inestimable folio of drawings, once in the possession of Vasari, were certain

[1] Yet for Vasari there was some further magic of crimson in the lips and cheeks, lost for us.

designs by Verrocchio, faces of such impressive beauty that Leonardo in his boyhood copied them many times. It is hard not to connect with these designs of the elder by-past master, as with its germinal principle, the unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays over all Leonardo's work. Besides, the picture is a portrait. From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams; and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last. What was the relationship of a living Florentine to this creature of his thought? By what strange affinities had she and the dream grown thus apart, yet so closely together? Present from the first, incorporeal in Leonardo's thought, dimly traced in the designs of Verrocchio, she is found present at last in Il Giocondo's house. That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes and flute players, that subtle expression was protracted on the face. Again, was it in four years and by renewed labour never really completed, or in four months and as by stroke of magic, that the image was projected?

The presence that thus so strangely rose beside the waters is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years man had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come," and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would

they be troubled by this beauty into which the soul with all its maladies has passed? All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the reverie of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was mother of Helen of Troy, and as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern thought has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

During these years at Florence Leonardo's history is the history of his art; he himself is lost in the bright cloud of it. The outward history begins again in 1502, with a wild journey through central Italy, which he makes as the chief engineer of Cæsar Borgia. The biographer, putting together the stray jottings of his manuscripts, may follow him through every day of it, up the strange tower of

Sienna, which looks towards Rome, elastic like a bent bow, down to the sea-shore at Piombino, each place appearing as fitfully as in a fevered dream. . . . We catch a glimpse of him again at Rome in 1514, surrounded by his mirrors and vials and furnaces, making strange toys that seemed alive of wax and quicksilver. The hesitation which had haunted him all through life, and made like one under a spell, was upon him now with double force. No one had ever carried political indifferentism farther; it had always been his philosophy to "fly before the storm;" he is for the Sforzas or against them, as the tide of their fortune turns. Yet now he was suspected by the anti-Gallian society at Rome of French tendencies. It paralyzed him to find himself among enemies; and he turned wholly to France, which had long courted him.

France was about to become an Italy more Italian than Italy itself. Francis the First, like Lewis the Twelfth before him, was attracted by the finesse of Leonardo's work; *La Gioconda* was already in his cabinet, and he offered Leonardo the little Château de Clou, with its vineyards and meadows, in the soft valley of the Masse, and not too far from the great outer sea. M. Arsène Houssaye has succeeded in giving a pensive local colour to this part of his subject, with which, as a Frenchman, he could best deal. "A Monsieur Lyonard, peinteur du Roy pour Amboyse," — so the letter of Francis the First is headed. It opens a prospect, one of the most attractive in the history of art, where, under a strange mixture of lights, Italian art dies away as a French exotic.

*Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London, 1873).

## THE ADORATION OF THE LAMB

### (*VAN EYCK*)

KUGLER

HUBERT VAN EYCK was born, according to the common acceptation, in 1366. John van Eyck was his junior by some unknown number of years. Chroniclers of the Sixteenth Century vaguely suggest that the two brothers settled at Ghent in 1410. There is every reason to believe that all these dates are incorrect; that Hubert was born after 1366, and that the date of his migration to Ghent must be placed later in the century. It is credible that both the brothers were court painters to Philip of Charolois, heir apparent to the throne of Burgundy, who lived with his wife Michelle de France at Ghent between 1418 and 1421. In the service of the prince, painters were free from the constraint of their guild, but on the withdrawal of the court the privilege would cease; and this explains how the names of the Van Eycks were not recorded in the register of the corporation of St. Luke till 1421, when, on the death of the Countess Michelle, and as a tribute to her memory, they were registered as masters without a fee. John van Eyck soon found employment in the court atmosphere, which seemed congenial to him, whilst Hubert remained at Ghent, received commissions from the municipality (1424), and became acquainted with



THE ADORATION OF THE LAMB.
*Van Eyck.*

Jodocus Vydts, for whom he composed the vast altar-piece known as the *Adoration of the Lamb*. It was not fated that he should finish the great work which he was then induced to begin. He probably sketched the subjects that were to adorn the panels, and completed some of the more important of them. At his death in 1426 he was buried in the chapel, the decoration of which had been the last occupation of his life. We may sum up the qualities which distinguished him, and the services which he rendered to the art of his country, in the following sentences: —

He carried the realistic tendency, already existing in the Flemish masters, to an extraordinary pitch of excellence, whilst in many essential respects he adhered to the more ideal feeling of the previous period, imparting to this, by the means of his far richer powers of representation, greater distinctness, truth of nature, and variety of expression. Throughout his works he displayed an elevated and highly energetic conception of the stern import of his labours in the service of the Church. The prevailing arrangement of his subject is symmetrical, holding fast the early architectonic rules which had hitherto presided over ecclesiastic art. The later mode of arrangement, in which a freer and more dramatic and picturesque feeling was introduced, is only seen in Hubert van Eyck's works in subjection to these rules. Thus his heads exhibit the aim at beauty and dignity belonging to the earlier period, only combined with more truth of nature. His draperies unite its pure taste and softness of folds with greater breadth; the realistic principle being apparent in that greater attention to detail

which a delicate indication of the material necessitates. Nude figures are studied from nature with the utmost fidelity; undraped portions are also given with much truth, especially the hands; only the feet remain feeble. That, however, which is almost the principal quality of his art, is the hitherto unprecedented power, depth, transparency, and harmony of his *colouring*. To attain this he availed himself of a mode of painting in oil which he and his brother had perfected. Oil painting, it is true, had long been in use, but only in a very undeveloped form, and for inferior purposes. According to the most recent and thorough investigations, the improvement introduced by the Van Eycks, and which they doubtless only very gradually worked out, were the following. First, they removed the chief impediment which had hitherto obstructed the application of oil-paint to pictures properly so called. For, in order to accelerate the slow drying of the oil colours, it had been necessary to add a varnish to them, which consisted of oil boiled with a resin. Owing to the dark colour of this varnish, in which amber, or more frequently sandarac, was used, this plan, from its darkening effect on most colours, had hitherto proved unsuccessful. The Van Eycks, however, succeeded in preparing so colourless a varnish that they could apply it without disadvantage, to all colours. In painting a picture they proceeded on the following system. The outline was drawn on a *gesso* ground, so strongly sized that no oil could penetrate the surface. The under painting was then executed in a generally warm brownish glazing colour, and so thinly that the light ground was clearly seen through it. They then laid on the local colours, thinner in the lights,

and, from the quantity of vehicle used, more thickly in the shadows; in the latter availing themselves often of the under painting as a foil. In all other parts they so nicely preserved the balance between the solid and the glazing colours as to attain that union of body and transparency which is their great excellence. Finally, in the use of the brush they obtained that perfect freedom which the new vehicle permitted; either leaving the touch of the brush distinct, or fusing the touches tenderly together, as the object before them required. Of all the works which are now attributed to Hubert, but one is genuine and historically authenticated. This noble work is certified by an inscription. It is a large altar picture, consisting of two rows of separate panels, once in the Cathedral of St. Bavon at Ghent. It was painted, as before remarked, for Jodocus Vydts, Seigneur of Pamele, and Burgomaster of Ghent, and his wife Elizabeth, of the then distinguished family of Burlunt, for their mortuary chapel in that cathedral.[1] When the wings were opened, which occurred only on festivals, the subject of the upper centre picture was seen, consisting of three panels, on which were the Triune God — the King of heaven and earth — and at his side the Holy Virgin and the Baptist; on the inside of the wings were angels, who with songs and sacred music celebrate the praises of the Most High: at the two extremities, each inside the half-shutters which covered the figure of God the Father, were Adam and Eve, the representatives of fallen man. The lower central picture shows the Lamb of the Revelation, whose blood flows into a cup; over it is the dove of the

1 Carton, *Les Trois Frères van Eyck*, p. 36.

Holy Spirit; angels, who hold the instruments of the Passion, worship the Lamb, and four groups, each consisting of many persons, advance from the sides: they comprise the holy martyrs, male and female, with priests and laymen; in the foreground is the fountain of life; in the distance the towers of the heavenly Jerusalem. On the wing pictures, other groups are coming up to adore the Lamb; on the left, those who have laboured for the kingdom of the Lord by worldly deeds — the soldiers of Christ, and the righteous judges; on the right, those who, through self-denial and renunciation of earthly good, have served Him in the spirit — holy hermits and pilgrims; a picture underneath, which represented hell, finished the whole.

This work is now dispersed: the centre pictures and the panels of Adam and Eve only being in Ghent.[1] The lower picture of hell was early injured and lost, and the others form some of the greatest ornaments of the gallery of the Berlin Museum.[2]

[1 Marc van Vaernewijck in a MS. of 1566–8, describing the Ghent troubles, states that on the 19th of August, two days before the iconoclasts plundered St. Bavon, the picture of the Mystic Lamb was removed from the Vijdts chapel and concealed in one of the towers. See the MS., *Van die Beroerlicke Tij'den in die Nederlanden*, recently printed at Ghent (1872), p. 146. On the same page in which Vaernewijck relates this story he says that he refers his readers, for the lives of the Van Eycks to his book, *Mijn leecken Philosophie int xx^e bouck*. This book, which probably still exists on the shelves of some library, has not as yet been discovered.]

2 "The pictures here exhibited as the works of Hemmelinck, Messis, Lucas of Holland, A. Dürer, and even Holbein, are inferior to those ascribed to Eyck in colour, execution, and taste. The draperies of the three on a gold ground, especially that of the middle

The three figures of the upper centre picture are designed with all the dignity of statue-like repose belonging to the early style; they are painted, too, on a ground of gold and tapestry, as was constantly the practice in earlier times: but united with the traditional type we already find a successful representation of life and nature in all their truth. They stand on the frontier of two different styles, and, from the excellence of both, form a wonderful and most impressive whole. In all the solemnity of antique dignity the Heavenly Father sits directly fronting the spectator — his right hand raised to give the benediction to the Lamb, and to all the figures below; in his left is a crystal sceptre; on his head the triple crown, the emblem of the Trinity. The features are such as are ascribed to Christ by the traditions of the Church, but noble and well-proportioned; the expression is forcible, though passionless. The tunic of this figure, ungirt, is of a deep red, as well as the mantle, which last is fastened over the breast by a rich clasp, and, falling down equally from both shoulders, is thrown in beautiful folds over the feet. Behind the figure, and as high as the head, is a hanging of green tapestry adorned with a golden pelican (a well-known symbol of the Redeemer); behind the head the ground is gold, and on it, in a semicircle, are three inscriptions, which again describe the Trinity, as all-mighty, all-good, and all-bountiful. The two other figures

figure, could not be improved in simplicity, or elegance, by the taste of Raphael himself. The three heads of God the Father, the Virgin, and St. John the Baptist, are not inferior in roundness, force, or sweetness to the heads of L. da Vinci, and possess a more positive principle of colour." — *Life of Fuseli*, i. p. 267. This is a very remarkable opinion for the period when it was written.

of this picture display equal majesty; both are reading holy books and are turned towards the centre figure. The countenance of John expresses ascetic seriousness, but in the Virgin's we find a serene grace, and a purity of form, which approach very nearly to the happier efforts of Italian art.

On the wing next to the Virgin stand eight angels singing before a music-desk. They are represented as choristers in splendid vestments and crowns. The brilliancy of the stuffs and precious stones is given with the hand of a master, the music-desk is richly ornamented with Gothic carved work and figures, and the countenances are full of expression and life; but in the effort to imitate nature with the utmost truth, so as even to enable us to distinguish with certainty the different voices of the double quartet, the spirit of a holier influence has already passed away. On the opposite wing, St. Cecilia sits at an organ, the keys of which she touches with an expression of deep meditation: other angels stand behind the organ with different stringed instruments. The expression of these heads shows far more feeling, and is more gentle; the execution of the stuffs and accessories is equally masterly. The two extreme wings of the upper series, the subjects of which are Adam and Eve, are now in the Museum at Brussels. The attempt to paint the nude figure of the size of life, with the most careful attention to minute detail, is eminently successful, with the exception of a certain degree of hardness in the drawing. Eve holds in her right hand the forbidden fruit. In the filling up, which the shape of the altar-piece made necessary over

these panels, there are small subjects in chiaroscuro: over Adam, the sacrifice of Cain and Abel; over Eve, the death of Abel — death, therefore, as the immediate consequence of original sin.

The arrangement of the lower middle picture, the worship of the Lamb, is strictly symmetrical, as the mystic nature of the allegorical subject demanded, but there is such beauty in the landscape, in the pure atmosphere, in the bright green of the grass, in the masses of trees and flowers, even in the single figures which stand out from the four great groups, that we no longer perceive either hardness or severity in this symmetry. The wing picture on the right, representing the holy pilgrims, is, in the figures, less striking than the others. Here St. Christopher, who wandered through the world seeking the most mighty Lord, strides before all, a giant in stature, whilst a host of smaller pilgrims, of various ages, follow him. A fruitful valley, with many details, showing a surprising observation of nature, is seen through the slender trees. The cast of the folds in the ample red drapery of St. Christopher, as in the upper picture, reminds us still of the earlier style. The whimsical and singular expression in the countenances of the pilgrims is also very remarkable. The picture next to the last described is more pleasing; it represents the troop of holy anchorites passing out of a rocky defile. In front are St. Paul the Hermit and St. Anthony, the two who set the first example of retirement from the world; and the procession closes with the two holy women who also passed the greater part of their lives in the wilderness, Mary Magdalen and St. Mary of Egypt. The heads are full of

character, with great variety of expression: on every countenance may be traced the history of its life. Grave old men stand before us, each one differing from the other; one is firm and strong, another more feeble; one cheerful and single-minded, another less open. Some inspired fanatics wildly raise their heads, whilst others with a simple and almost humorous expression walk by their side, and others again are still struggling with their earthly nature. It is a remarkable picture, and leads us deep into the secrets of the human heart—a picture which in all times must be ranked amongst the master-works of art, and which to be intelligible needs no previous inquiry into the relative period and circumstances of the artists who created it. The landscape background, the rocky defile, the wooded declivity, and the trees laden with fruit, are all eminently beautiful. The eye would almost lose itself in this rich sense of still life if it were not constantly led back to the interest of the foreground.

The opposite wing pictures differ essentially in conception from those just described. Their subject did not in itself admit such varied interest, and it is rather the common expression of a tranquil harmony of mind, and of the consciousness of a resolute will, which attracts the spectator, combined at the same time with a skilful representation of earthly splendour and magnificence. Inside the wing to the right we see the soldiers of the Lord on fine chargers, simple and noble figures in bright armour, with surcoats of varied form and colour. The three foremost with the waving banners appear to be St. Sebastian, St. George, and St. Michael, the patron saints of the old

Flemish guilds, which accompanied their earls to the Crusades. In the head of St. George, the painter has strikingly succeeded in rendering the spirit of the chivalry of the Middle Ages — that true heroic feeling and sense of power which humbles itself before the higher sense of the Divinity. Emperors and kings follow after him. The landscape is extremely beautiful and highly finished, with rich and finely-formed mountain ridges, and the fleecy clouds of spring floating lightly across. The second picture (the last to the left) represents the righteous judges; they also are on horseback, and are fine and dignified figures. In front, on a splendidly caparisoned grey horse, rides a mild benevolent old man, in blue velvet trimmed with fur. This is the likeness of Hubert, to whom his brother has thus dedicated a beautiful memorial. Rather deeper in the group is John himself, clothed in black, with his shrewd, sharp countenance turned to the spectator. We are indebted to tradition for the knowledge of these portraits.

Both these wing pictures have the special interest of showing us, by means of armour, rich costumes, and caparisons, a true and particular representation of the Court of Burgundy in the time of Philip the Good — when it was confessedly the most superb court in Europe.

The upper wings, when closed, represented the Annunciation, and this was so arranged that on the outer and wider ones (the backs of the two pictures of angels singing and playing) were the figures of the Virgin and the Angel Gabriel, — on the inner narrower ones (that is, on the back of the Adam and Eve), a continuation of the Virgin's

chamber. Here, as was often the case in the outside pictures of large altar-pieces, the colouring was kept down to a more uniform tone, in order that the full splendour might be reserved to adorn with greater effect the principal subject within. The angel and the Holy Virgin are clothed in flowing white drapery, but the wings of the angel glitter with a play of soft and brilliant colour, imitating those of the green parrot. The heads are noble and well painted; the furniture of the room is executed with great truth, as well as the view through the arcade which forms the background of the Virgin's chamber, into the streets of a town, one of which we recognize as a street in Ghent.

In the semicircles which close these panels above, on the right and left, are the prophets Micah and Zechariah, whose heads have great dignity, but are somewhat stiff and unsatisfactory in their attitudes. In the centre (corresponding with the figures in chiaroscuro over Adam and Eve) are two kneeling female figures represented as sibyls.

The exterior portion of the lower wings contains the statues of the two St. Johns. These display a heavy style of drapery, and there is something peculiarly angular in the breaks of the folds, imitated perhaps from the sculpture of the day, which had also already abandoned the older Northern mould. This peculiarity by degrees impressed itself more and more on the style of painting of the Fifteenth Century, and the drapery of the figures in the Annunciation already betrays a tendency towards it. The heads exhibit a feeling for beauty of form which is rare in this school. John the Baptist, who is pointing

with his right hand to the Lamb on his left, is appropriately represented, as the last of the Prophets, as a man of earnest mien and dignified features, with much hair and beard. John the Evangelist, on the other hand, appears as a tender youth with delicate features, looking very composedly at the monster with four snakes which, at his benediction, rises from the chalice in his hand.

The likenesses of the donors are given with inimitable life and fidelity. They show the careful hand of Jan van Eyck, but already approach that limit within which the imitation of the accidental and insignificant in the human countenance should be confined. The whole, however, is in admirable keeping, and the care of the artist can hardly be considered too anxiously minute, since feeling and character are as fully expressed as the mere bodily form. The aged Jodocus Vydts, to whose liberality posterity is indebted for this great work of art, is dressed in a simple red garment trimmed with fur; he kneels with his hands folded, and his eyes directed upwards. His countenance, however, is not attractive; the forehead is low and narrow, and the eye without power. The mouth alone shows a certain benevolence, and the whole expression of the features denotes a character capable of managing worldly affairs. The idea of originating so great a work as this picture is to be found in the noble, intellectual, and expressive features of his wife, who kneels opposite to him in the same attitude, and in still plainer attire.

At Hubert van Eyck's death, on the 16th of September, 1426, Jodocus Vydts engaged Jan van Eyck, the younger brother and scholar of Hubert, to finish the picture in the

incomplete parts.[1] A close comparison of all the panels of this altar-piece with the authentic works of Jan van Eyck shows that the following portions differ in drawing, colouring, cast of drapery, and treatment, from his style, and may therefore with certainty be attributed to the hand of Hubert: — of the inner side of the upper series, the Almighty, the Virgin, St. John the Baptist, St. Cecilia with the angels playing on musical instruments, and Adam and Eve; of the inner side of the lower series, the side of the centre picture with the apostles and saints, and the wings with the hermits and pilgrims, though with the exception of the landscapes. On the other hand, of the inner side of the upper series, the wing picture with the singing angels is by Jan van Eyck; of the inner side of the lower series, the side of the centre picture of the Adoration of the Lamb, containing the patriarchs and prophets, etc., and the entire landscape; the wing with the soldiers of Christ and the Righteous Judges, and the landscapes to the wing with the hermits and pilgrims; finally, the entire outer sides of the wings, comprising the portraits of the founders, and

[1] This appears from the following inscription of the time, on the frame of the outer wing: —

"Pictor Hubertus ab Eyck, major quo nemo repertus
Incepit; pondusque Johannes arte secundus
Frater perfecit, Judoci Vyd prece fretus
[VersV seXta MaI Vos CoLLoCat aCta tVerI]."

[The last verse gives the date of May 6, 1432.] The discovery of this inscription, under a coating of green paint, was made in Berlin in 1824, when the first word and a half of the third line, which were missing, were [imperfectly] supplied [with "frater perfectus"] by an old copy of this inscription, found by M. de Bast, the Belgian connoisseur.

the Annunciation. The Prophet Zechariah and the two sibyls alone show a feebler hand.[1]

About one hundred years after the completion of this altar-piece an excellent copy of it was made by Michael Coxis for Philip II. of Spain. The panels of this work, like those of the original, are dispersed; some are in the Berlin Museum, some in the possession of the King of Bavaria, and others in the remains of the King of Holland's collection at the Hague. A second copy, which comprises the inside pictures of this great work, from the chapel of the Town-house at Ghent, is in the Antwerp Museum.

*Handbook of Painting: the German, Flemish, and Dutch Schools*, based on the handbook of Kugler remodelled by Dr. Waagen and revised by J. A. Crowe (London, 1874).

1 [Dr. Waagen did not always hold decided opinions as to what portions of the altar-piece of Ghent are by Hubert and John van Eyck, respectively. There is no doubt that some of "the sublime earnestness" which Schlegel notes in the Eternal, the Virgin, and John the Baptist, and much of the stern realism which characterizes those figures, is to be found in the patriarchs and prophets, and in the hermits and pilgrims, and in the Adam and Eve; but it is too much to say that these wing pictures can "with certainty be assigned to Hubert," and it is not to be forgotten that John van Eyck worked in this picture on the lines laid down by his elder brother, and must have caught some of the spirit of his great master.]

## THE DEATH OF PROCRIS

### (*PIERO DI COSIMO*)

EDWARD T. COOK

A VERY characteristic work by Piero, called di Cosimo, after his godfather and master, Cosimo Rosselli. Piero's peculiarities are well known to all readers of George Eliot's *Romola*, where everything told us about him by Vasari is carefully worked up. The first impression left by this picture — its quaintness — is precisely typical of the man. He shut himself off from the world, and stopped his ears; lived in the untidiest of rooms, and would not have his garden tended, "preferring to see all things wild and savage about him." He took his meals at times and in ways that no other man did, and Romola used to coax him with sweets and hard-boiled eggs. His fondness for quaint landscape ("he would sometimes stand beside a wall," says Vasari, "and image forth the most extraordinary landscapes that ever were") may be seen in this picture: so also may his love of animals, in which, says Vasari, he took "indescribable pleasure."

The subjects of his pictures were generally allegorical. In *Romola* he paints Tito and Romola as Bacchus and Ariadne; here he shows the death of Procris, the story in which the ancients embodied the folly of jealousy. For Procris being told that Cephalus was unfaithful, straight-



The Death of Procris.

*Piero di Cosimo.*

way believed the report and secretly followed him to the woods, for he was a great hunter. And Cephalus called upon "aura," the Latin for breeze, for Cephalus was hot after the chase: "Sweet air, O come," and echo answered, "Come, sweet air." But Procris, thinking that he was calling after his mistress, turned to see, and as she moved she made a rustling in the leaves, which Cephalus mistook for the motion of some beast of the forest, and let fly his unerring dart, which Procris once had given him.

> But Procris lay among the white wind-flowers,
> Shot in the throat. From out the little wound
> The slow blood drained, as drops in autumn showers
> Drip from the leaves upon the sodden ground.
> None saw her die but Lelaps, the swift hound,
> That watched her dumbly with a wistful fear,
> Till at the dawn, the hornèd wood-men found
> And bore her gently on a sylvan bier,
> To lie beside the sea, — with many an uncouth tear.
>
> AUSTIN DOBSON: *Old World Lyrics.*

*A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery* (London and New York, 1888).

## THE DEATH OF PROCRIS

### (*PIERO DI COSIMO*)

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

THE point that connects him with Botticelli is the romantic treatment of his classical mythology, best exemplified in his pictures of the tale of Perseus and Andromeda.[1] Piero was by nature and employment a decorative painter; the construction of cars for pageants, and the adornment of dwelling rooms and marriage chests, affected his whole style, rendering it less independent and more quaint than that of Botticelli. Landscape occupies the main part of his compositions, made up by a strange amalgam of the most eccentric details — rocks toppling over blue bays, sea-caverns and fantastic mountain ranges. Groups of little figures upon these spaces tell the story, and the best invention of the artist is lavished on the form of monstrous creatures like the dragon slain by Perseus. There is no attempt to treat the classic subject in a classic spirit: to do that and to fail in doing it, remained for Cellini. . . .[2] The same criticism applies to Piero's picture of the murdered Procris watched by a Satyr of the woodland.[3] In creating his Satyr the painter has not

[1] Uffizi Gallery.

[2] See the bas-relief upon the pedestal of his 'Perseus' in the Loggia de' Lanzi.

[3] In the National Gallery.

had recourse to any antique bas-relief, but has imagined for himself a being half human, half bestial, and yet wholly real; nor has he portrayed in Procris a nymph of Greek form, but a girl of Florence. The strange animals and gaudy flowers introduced into the landscape background further remove the subject from the sphere of classic treatment. Florentine realism and quaint fancy being thus curiously blended, the artistic result may be profitably studied for the light it throws upon the so-called Paganism of the earlier Renaissance. Fancy at that moment was more free than when superior knowledge of antiquity had created a demand for reproductive art, and when the painters thought less of the meaning of the fable for themselves than of its capability of being used as a machine for the display of erudition.

*The Renaissance in Italy* (London, 1877).

## THE MARRIAGE IN CANA

### (*TINTORET*)

### JOHN RUSKIN

THE Church of the Salute is farther assisted by the beautiful flight of steps in front of it down to the canal; and its façade is rich and beautiful of its kind, and was chosen by Turner for the principal object in his well known view of the Grand Canal. The principal faults of the building are the meagre windows in the sides of the cupola, and the ridiculous disguise of the buttresses under the form of colossal scrolls; the buttresses themselves being originally a hypocrisy, for the cupola is stated by Lazari to be of timber, and therefore needs none. The sacristy contains several precious pictures: the three on its roof by Titian, much vaunted, are indeed as feeble as they are monstrous; but the small Titian, *St. Mark with Sts. Cosmo and Damian*, was, when I first saw it, to my judgment, by far the first work of Titian's in Venice. It has since been restored by the Academy, and it seemed to me entirely destroyed, but I had not time to examine it carefully.

At the end of the larger sacristy is the lunette which once decorated the tomb of the Doge Francesco Dandolo, and, at the side of it, one of the most highly finished Tintoret's in Venice, namely: *The Marriage in Cana*



THE MARRIAGE IN CANA.

*Tintoret.*

An immense picture, some twenty-five feet long by fifteen high, and said by Lazari to be one of the few which Tintoret signed with his name. I am not surprised at his having done so in this case. Evidently the work has been a favourite with him, and he has taken as much pains as it was ever necessary for his colossal strength to take with anything. The subject is not one which admits of much singularity or energy in composition. It was always a favourite one with Veronese, because it gave dramatic interest to figures in gay costumes and of cheerful countenances; but one is surprised to find Tintoret, whose tone of mind was always grave, and who did not like to make a picture out of brocades and diadems, throwing his whole strength into the conception of a marriage feast; but so it is, and there are assuredly no female heads in any of his pictures in Venice elaborated so far as those which here form the central light. Neither is it often that the works of this mighty master conform themselves to any of the rules acted upon by ordinary painters; but in this instance the popular laws have been observed, and an academy student would be delighted to see with what severity the principal light is arranged in a central mass, which is divided and made more brilliant by a vigorous piece of shadow thrust into the midst of it, and which dies away in lesser fragments and sparkling towards the extremities of the picture. This mass of light is as interesting by its composition as by its intensity. The cicerone who escorts the stranger round the sacristy in the course of five minutes and allows him some forty seconds for the contemplation of a picture which the study of six months

would not entirely fathom, directs his attention very carefully to the "bell' effetto di prospettivo," the whole merit of the picture being, in the eyes of the intelligent public, that there is a long table in it, one end of which looks further off than the other; but there is more in the "bell' effetto di prospettivo" than the observance of the common law of optics. The table is set in a spacious chamber, of which the windows at the end let in the light from the horizon, and those in the side wall the intense blue of an Eastern sky. The spectator looks all along the table, at the farther end of which are seated Christ and the Madonna, the marriage guests on each side of it, — on one side men, on the other women; the men are set with their backs to the light, which passing over their heads and glancing slightly on the table-cloth, falls in full length along the line of young Venetian women, who thus fill the whole centre of the picture with one broad sunbeam, made up of fair faces and golden hair. Close to the spectator a woman has risen in amazement, and stretches across the table to show the wine in her cup to those opposite; her dark red dress intercepts and enhances the mass of gathered light. It is rather curious, considering the subject of the picture, that one cannot distinguish either the bride or the bridegroom; but the fourth figure from the Madonna in the line of women, who wears a white head-dress of lace and rich chains of pearls in her hair, may well be accepted for the former, and I think that between her and the woman on the Madonna's left hand the unity of the line of women is intercepted by a male figure: be this as it may, this fourth female face is the most beautiful, as far as I recollect, that

occurs in the works of the painter, with the exception only of the Madonna in the *Flight into Egypt*. It is an ideal which occurs indeed elsewhere in many of his works, a face at once dark and delicate, the Italian cast of feature moulded with the softness and childishness of English beauty some half a century ago; but I have never seen the ideal so completely worked out by the master. The face may best be described as one of the purest and softest of Stothard's conceptions, executed with all the strength of Tintoret. The other women are all made inferior to this one, but there are beautiful profiles and bendings of breasts and necks along the whole line. The men are all subordinate, though there are interesting portraits among them; perhaps the only fault of the picture being that the faces are a little too conspicuous, seen like balls of light among the crowd of minor figures which fill the background of the picture. The tone of the whole is sober and majestic in the highest degree; the dresses are all broad masses of colour, and the only parts of the picture which lay claim to the expression of wealth or splendour are the head-dresses of the women. In this respect the conception of the scene differs widely from that of Veronese, and approaches more nearly to the probable truth. Still the marriage is not an important one; an immense crowd, filling the background, forming superbly rich mosaic of colour against the distant sky. Taken as a whole the picture is perhaps the most perfect example which human art has produced of the utmost possible force and sharpness of shadow united with richness of local colour. In all the other works of Tintoret, and much more of other colourists, either the light and shade or the

local colour is predominant; in the one case the picture has a tendency to look as if painted by candle-light, in the other it becomes daringly conventional, and approaches the conditions of glass-painting. This picture unites colour as rich as Titian's with light and shade as forcible as Rembrandt's, and far more decisive.

There are one or two other interesting pictures of the early Venetian school in this sacristy, and several important tombs in the adjoining cloister; among which that of Francesco Dandolo, transported here from the Church of the Frari, deserves especial attention.

*Stones of Venice* (London, 1853).

## MADAME DE POMPADOUR

### (*DE LA TOUR*)

### CHARLES-AUGUSTIN SAINTE-BEUVE

MADAME DE POMPADOUR was not exactly a *grisette*, as her enemies affected to say and as Voltaire has said in a malicious moment: she was a *bourgeoise*, a blossom of finance, the most lovely woman in Paris, witty, elegant, adorned with a thousand gifts and a thousand talents, but with a way of feeling that did not have the grandeur and coldness of an aristocratic ambition. She loved the King for his own sake, as the handsomest man in his realm, as the one who had seemed the most amiable to her; she loved him sincerely, sentimentally, if not with a profound passion. On her arrival at court, her ideal would have been to amuse him with a thousand entertainments borrowed from the arts, or even from matters of the intellect, to make him happy and constant in a circle of varied enchantments and pleasures. A Watteau landscape, sports, comedies, pastorals in the shade, a continual Embarkation for Cythera, that would have been the round she would have preferred. But once transported into the slippery enclosure of the court, she could realize her ideal very imperfectly. Kind and obliging by nature, she had to take up arms to defend herself against enmity and perfidy and to take the offensive to avoid being overthrown; necessity led her into politics and induced her to make herself Minister of State.

She loved the arts and intellectual things far above the comprehension of any of the ladies of quality. On her arrival at her eminent and dishonourable post — much more dishonourable than she thought — she at first only thought of herself as destined to aid, to call to her side, and to encourage struggling merit and men of talent of all kinds. This is her sole glory, her best title, and her best excuse. She did her best to advance Voltaire and to make him agreeable to Louis XV., whom the petulant poet so strongly repelled by the vivacity and even the familiarity of his praises. She thought she had found a genius in Crébillon and honoured him accordingly. She showed favour to Gresset; she protected Marmontel; she welcomed Duclos; she admired Montesquieu and plainly showed it. She would have liked to serve Jean-Jacques Rousseau. When the King of Prussia ostentatiously gave d'Alembert a modest pension and Louis XV. was scoffing in her presence at the amount (1200 livres), in comparison with the term *sublime genius*, for which it was given, she advised him to forbid the philosopher to accept it and to double it himself; which Louis XV. did not dare to do; his religious principles would not permit it on account of the *Encyclopédie*. It was not her fault that we cannot say *the century of Louis XV.*, as we say *the century of Louis XIV.*

There are then in the career and power of Madame de Pompadour two distinct periods: the first, the most brilliant and most greatly favoured, was that following the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748): in this, she completely played her rôle of a youthful favourite, fond of peace, the arts, the pleasures of the mind, and advising and protecting all



Portrait of Madame de Pompadour.
*De la Tour.*

things happily. There was a second period, greatly checkered, but more frequently disastrous and fatal; this was the whole period of the Seven Years' War, the attempted assassination by Damiens, the defeat of Rosbach, and the insults of the victorious Frederick. These were harsh years which prematurely aged this weak and graceful woman, who was drawn into a struggle beyond her strength. . . . However, my impression is that things might have been worse, and that, with the aid of M. de Choiseul, by means of the Family Compact she again covered her own mistakes and the humiliation of the French monarchy with a certain amount of prestige.

It seems that the nation itself felt this and felt more especially that after this brilliant favourite there would be a greater fall; for when she died at Versailles, April 15, 1764, the regret of the Parisian populace, which some years before would have stoned her, was universal. . .

The one who seemed to regret her the least was Louis XV.; it is related that seeing from a window the hearse on its way from Versailles to Paris, the weather being dreadful, he only said:

"The Marquise will not have very fine weather for her journey."

All the masters of the French school of her time painted a portrait of Madame de Pompadour: we have one by Boucher, and another by Drouais which Grimm preferred to all others; but the most admirable of all is certainly La Tour's pastel owned by the Louvre. To this we go in order to see *la marquise* before we allow ourselves to judge of her, or to form the least idea of her personality.

She is represented as seated in an arm-chair, holding in one hand a book of music, and with her left arm resting on a marble table on which are placed a globe and several volumes. The largest one of these books, which is next to the globe, is Volume IV. of the *Encyclopédie;* next to it in a row are the volumes of *L'Esprit des Lois*, *La Henriade*, and *Pastor Fido*, indicative of the tastes at once serious and sentimental of the queen of this spot. Upon the table also and at the base of the globe is seen a blue book upside down, its cover is inscribed: *Pierres gravées;* this is her work. Underneath it and hanging down over the table is a print representing an engraver of precious stones at work with these words: *Pompadour sculpsit.* On the floor, by the foot of the table, is a portfolio marked with her arms and containing engravings and drawings; we have here a complete trophy. In the background, between the feet of the consol-table, is seen a vase of Japanese porcelain: why not of Sèvres? Behind her arm-chair and on the side of the room opposite the table is another arm-chair, or an ottoman, on which lies a guitar. But it is the person herself who is in every respect marvellous in her extreme delicacy, gracious dignity, and exquisite beauty. Holding her music-book in her hand lightly and carelessly, her attention is suddenly called away from it; she seems to have heard a noise and turns her head. Is it indeed the King who has arrived and is about to enter? She seems to be expecting him with certainty and to be listening with a smile. Her head, thus turned aside, reveals the outline of the neck in all its grace, and her very short but deliciously-waved

hair is arranged in rows of little curls, the blonde tint of which may be divined beneath the slight covering of powder. The head stands out against a light-blue background, which in general dominates the whole picture. Everything satisfies and delights the eye; it is a melody, perhaps, rather than a harmony. A bluish light, sifting downwards, falls across every object. There is nothing in this enchanted boudoir which does not seem to pay court to the goddess, — nothing, not even *L'Esprit des Lois* and *L'Encyclopédie*. The flowered satin robe makes way along the undulations of the breast for several rows of those bows, which were called, I believe, *parfaits contentements*, and which are of a very pale lilac. Her own flesh-tints and complexion are of a white lilac, delicately azured. That breast, those ribbons, and that robe — all blend together harmoniously, or rather lovingly. Beauty shines in all its brilliance and in full bloom. The face is still young; the temples have preserved their youth and freshness; the lips are also still fresh and have not yet withered as they are said to have become from having been too frequently puckered or bitten in repressing anger and insults. Everything in the countenance and in the attitude expresses grace, supreme taste, and affability and amenity rather than sweetness, a queenly air which she had to assume but which sits naturally upon her and is sustained without too much effort. I might continue and describe many lovely details, but I prefer to stop and send the curious to the model itself: there they will find a thousand things that I scarcely dare to touch upon.

Such in her best days was this ravishing, ambitious,

frail, but sincere woman, who in her elevation remained good, faithful (I love to believe) in her sin, obliging, so far as she could be, but vindictive when driven to it; who was quite one of her own sex after all, and, finally, whose intimate life her lady-in-waiting has been able to show us without being too heavy or crushing a witness against her.

In spite of everything, she was exactly the mistress to suit this reign, the only one who could have succeeded in turning it to account in the sense of opinion, the only one who could lessen the crying discord between the least literary of kings and the most literary of epochs. If the Abbé Galiani, in a curious page, loudly preferring the age of Louis XV. to that of Louis XIV., has been able to say of this age of the human mind so fertile in results: "Such another reign will not be met with anywhere for a long time," Mme. de Pompadour certainly contributed to this to some extent. This graceful woman rejuvenated the court by bringing into it the vivacity of her thoroughly French tastes, tastes that were Parisian. As mistress and friend of the Prince, as protectress of the arts, her mind found itself entirely on a level with her rôle and her rank: as a politician, she bent, she did ill, but perhaps not worse than any other favourite in her place would have done at that period when a real statesman was wanting among us.

When she found herself dying after a reign of nineteen years; when at the age of forty-two years she had to leave these palaces, these riches, these marvels of art she had amassed, this power so envied and disputed, but which she kept entirely in her own hands to her last day, she did not

say with a sigh, like Mazarin, "So I must leave all this!" She faced death with a firm glance, and as the *curé* of the Madeleine, who had come to visit her at Versailles, was about to depart, she said: "Wait a moment, *Monsieur le Curé*, we will go together."

Madame de Pompadour may be considered the last in date of the Kings' mistresses who were worthy of the name: after her it would be impossible to descend and enter with any decency into the history of the Du Barry. The kings and emperors who have succeeded in France, from that day to this, have been either too virtuous, or too despotic, or too gouty, or too repentant, or too much the paterfamilias, to allow themselves such useless luxuries: at the utmost, only a few vestiges have been observable. The race of Kings' mistresses, therefore, may be said to be greatly interrupted, even if not ended, and Mme. de Pompadour stands before our eyes in history as the last as well as the most brilliant of all.[1]

*Causeries de Lundi* (Paris, 1851–57), Vol. II.

[1] Here is an exact statement of the civil register of the State relating to Mme. de Pompadour: Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, marquise de Pompadour, born in Paris, Dec. 29, 1721 (Saint-Eustache); — married March 9, 1741, to Charles-Guillaume Lenormant, seigneur d'Étioles (Saint-Eustache); died April 15, 1764; interred on the 17th at the Capucines de la place Vendôme. Her parish in Paris was la Madeleine; her hôtel, in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, now l'Élysée.

M. Le Roi, librarian of Versailles, has published, after an authentic manuscript the *Relevé des dépenses de Mme. de Pompadour depuis la première année de sa faveur jusqu'à sa mort.* This statement, which mentions the sums and their uses, presents a complete picture of the marquise's varied tastes, and does not try too much to dishonour her memory.

## THE HAY WAIN

(*CONSTABLE*)

C. L. BURNS

A LITTLE strip of country on the borders of Essex and Suffolk, not ten miles in length, and but two or three in breadth, presenting to the casual observer few features more striking than are to be seen in many other parts of England, but hailed with delight by painters for its simple charm, has exercised a wider influence upon modern landscape painting than all the noble scenery of Switzerland or the glories of Italy; for here was nurtured that last and greatest master of that school of English landscape painting, which made the Eastern Counties famous in the annals of art. He was so essentially English, it might be said local, in his feeling, that he never left his country, and produced his greatest works within the narrow limits of his native valley; in whom love of locality was indeed the very basis of his art.

Constable, for it was he, like Rembrandt, was the son of a miller, and was born at a time when the winds and flowing waters were powers in the land, bearing a golden harvest on their health-giving and invisible currents, turning sails upon countless hill-tops, and wheels in every river — before the supplanter, steam, was even dreamed of. His earliest recollections were mingled with the busy clatter



The Hay Wain.

*Constable.*

of wheels, and the whirr of sails, as they sped round before the wind, was the music of his boyhood. His father, good man of the world as he was, holding a high opinion of the solid comforts gained by following his own profitable calling, placed his son, at the age of seventeen, in charge of a windmill, hoping thereby to curb his rising enthusiasm for the more glorious but less substantial pursuit of art. Alas! how little can we predict the effect of our actions. This one, framed to divert his purpose in life, was the very means of leading him to study more closely the ever-varying beauties of the sky, with its matchless combinations of form and colour, and all the subtle differences of atmosphere, which in after-life formed a distinctive feature in his work; and, for a landscape-painter, perhaps no early training could have been better. His daily occupation by bringing him continually face to face with Nature, and necessitating a constant observance of all her changing phenomena, trained his heart and eye to discover her secrets, hidden from the careless, but revealed to all true lovers of her wisdom.

The effect upon a temperament so artistic as Constable's was as permanent as it was quickly apparent. In less than a year we find his father reluctantly converted to his son's views in the choice of a career, and consenting to his sojourn in London, to learn the principles and technicalities of his profession, which he soon strove to forget and subsequently set at defiance. Two years of studio work was sufficient to convince him that his school was the open air; and in his own country, amid the scenes of his boyhood, he could shake off the chains of fashion, which

bound the landscape-painter of that day, and go straight to nature for his inspiration. Concerning this he writes: "For the last two years I have been running after pictures, and seeing truth at second-hand. I have not endeavoured to represent nature with the same elevation of mind with which I set out, but have rather tried to make my performances look like the work of other men; I shall return to Bergholt, where I shall get a pure and unaffected manner of representing the scenes which may employ me — there is room for a *natural* painter;" a prediction which was hardly fulfilled in his lifetime, for, with the majority of even intelligent lovers of art, his works were rarely understood and never popular, though the appreciative sympathy of an enlightened few kept him from despair. But, appreciated or not, he had found his life's work, and henceforth his mission was to depict the scenes around his old home, and to express the love he felt so keenly for "every stile and stump, and every lane in dear Bergholt."

"Painting," he writes, "is with me but another word for feeling, and I associate my careless boyhood with all that lies on the banks of the Stour — those scenes made me a painter, and I am grateful."

How lovingly he repaid this debt of gratitude to his native valley will be seen by the tender care he bestowed in depicting its beauties; indeed, the strongest impression produced after visiting Constable's country and again turning to a study of his works, is the marvellous sense of locality he has embodied in them. You seem to breathe the very air of Suffolk and hear again the "sound of water escaping from mill-dams," and see once more "the willows,

the old rotten planks, the slimy posts, and brickwork," he delighted in. In spite of the fifty years which have elapsed since he laid aside his brush for ever, with all the accidents of time and season, the subjects he painted are still to be easily found, and clearly distinguished by anyone at all acquainted with his works. The only exception is in the original of the famous *Cornfield*, now in the National Gallery. Here the enemy has been busy, and by the aid of his children Growth and Decay, has succeeded in transforming the subject out of all recognition, tearing down the trees on the left, enlarging the group on the right, shutting out the view of Stratford Church, and choking up the brook from which the boy is drinking. Nor has Time been idle with this same boy, who six years ago, was carried to his last resting-place in Bergholt Churchyard, aged sixty-five. . . .

It is not, however, in Bergholt village that we must seek for the scenes which made Constable a painter, but down in the quiet hollow a mile and a half to the eastward on the banks of his much-loved Stour, and around the paternal mill of Flatford, not improved as is the one at Dedham into hideousness, but remaining much as it was in the artist's day. Both mills were the property of Golding Constable, witnessed thereto in the latter, the initials G. C., carved in irregular characters deep in the huge mill scales, still legible beneath the dust of a century, as enduring almost as the memory of his gifted son.

A low uneven structure is Flatford Mill, with many gables and queer outbuildings; standing on an island, the millhouse backing the main stream and facing a pool

formed by the mill-tail, which, flowing through the mill, rejoins the main stream a hundred yards below. To this spot came Constable many a hundred times, we may be sure, fishing in the stream, or sketching with his close ally, John Dunthorne, the village plumber, and a lover of nature; their performances with the brush doubtless puzzling old Willy Lott — whose farmhouse occupies the opposite side of the pool; but though his judgment might not have been so technically sound upon art matters as upon the merits of those hornless Suffolk cattle, said to have been unconsciously introduced by Constable into pictures painted in far distant countries, yet his criticisms would have been worth hearing by virtue of their originality. Willy cared but little for the outer world and its mode of thinking, any curiosity he may have ever had concerning it being amply satisfied by the experiences of four nights, separated by long intervals, spent away from his ancestral roof in four-score years. That this house of his possessed a peculiar fascination for Constable is evident from its forming an important feature in two of his best known works, the *Hay Wain* and the *Valley Farm*, besides appearing in numerous sketches.

Every foot of ground round the old mill seems to have imparted a yearning in him to paint it. The lock in the main stream, with its tide of life passing through, busier then than in these days of railways; the bridge above, with the picturesque cottages still standing, all were lingered over, studied, and painted with an affection inspired by the recollection of those golden hours of his boyhood. Here, doubtless, was the scene of those stolen interviews with

his future wife, following the ecclesiastical ban placed on his suit by the lady's grandfather, Dr. Rhudde, the Rector, whose belief in the preordination of marriage was tempered in this case by a wise discretion on the subject of settlements. To the young painter's inability to satisfy this scruple may be attributed the Doctor's discouragement of any practical application of the theory. The marriage duly took place despite the old gentleman, who, although not apparently reconciled during the remainder of his life, pleasantly surprised the young couple by leaving his granddaughter four thousand pounds when he died.

The mill-tail is used as a thoroughfare, up which the hay is carted, from the meadows on the opposite bank of the river, a shallow and stony bedded back-water meeting it at its junction with the main stream. Down this back-water in July the heavy cart-horses drag the sweet-scented haywains knee deep and axle deep in water, leaving feathery wisps of hay hanging from the willows, and clinging to the tall rushes upon either hand, the waggoner bravely astride the leader, while haymakers and children are seated on top of the load, not a little nervous in mid-stream, and clinging tightly when the horses are struggling up the deep ascent into the stack-yard.

A contrast, indeed, is the bustle of the hay-making with the splash of the teams and the merry voices of the children to the solitude which reigns supreme in this silent, currentless backwater during the rest of the year. Winding between the long flat meadows away from the traffic of the river it becomes in early summer a veritable museum of aquatic plants: lilies choke its passage, and the ancient

gates, giving access to the adjoining fields, lie lost in creamy meadow-sweet, their sodden and decaying posts wreathed in sweet forget-me-nots, while sword-like rushes rear their points till they part the grey-green willow leaves above. The silence would become oppressive were it not for an indistinct murmur from the working world, which forms a fitful background to the prevailing stillness; the distant roar of a train as it rushes on its journey to the palpitating heart of London, the faint sound of a mowing machine in the meadows, or the crack of a whip up the tow-path as a barge moves up to the primitive lock, add a touch of human interest without disturbing the sense of restfulness from the eager hurry of Nineteenth Century existence. . . .

Constable's country may be said to extend along the Stour valley, anywhere within walking distance of his home, Neyland, Stoke, Langham, Stratford, and in the opposite direction, Harwich, all having furnished material for his fruitful pencil. But, despite much admirable work done in each of these places, it was to the few acres of river and meadow round the old mill at Flatford that he owed his first awakening to the wonders of nature around him. To these, his first and truest masters, his memory was ever turning for inspiration ; and during the life-long battle he waged with all that was untrue, he was certain of finding there encouragement to victory and solace in disappointment.

*Magazine of Art* (1891).

## THE SURRENDER OF BREDA

### (*VELASQUEZ*)

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

*THE SURRENDER OF BREDA*, better known under the name of *Las Lanzas*, mingles in the most exact proportion realism and grandeur. Truth pushed to the point of portraiture does not diminish in the slightest degree the dignity of the historical style.

A vast and spacious sky full of light and vapour, richly laid in with pure ultramarine, mingles its azure with the blue distances of an immense landscape where sheets of water gleam with silver. Here and there incendiary smoke ascends from the ground in fantastic wreaths and joins the clouds of the sky. In the foreground on each side, a numerous group is massed: here the Flemish troops, there the Spanish troops, leaving for the interview between the vanquished and victorious generals an open space which Velasquez has made a luminous opening with a glimpse of the distance where the glitter of the regiments and standards is indicated by a few masterly touches.

The Marquis of Spinola, bareheaded with hat and staff of command in hand, in his black armour damascened with gold, welcomes with a chivalrous courtesy that is affable and almost affectionate, as is customary between enemies who are generous and worthy of mutual esteem, the

Governor of Breda, who is bowing and offering him the keys of the city in an attitude of noble humiliation.

Flags quartered with white and blue, their folds agitated by the wind, break in the happiest manner the straight lines of the lances held upright by the Spaniards. The horse of the Marquis, represented almost foreshortened from the rear and with its head turned, is a skilful invention to tone down military symmetry, so unfavourable to painting.

It would not be easy to convey in words the chivalric pride and the Spanish grandeur which distinguish the heads of the officers forming the General's staff. They express the calm joy of triumph, tranquil pride of race, and familiarity with great events. These personages would have no need to bring proofs for their admittance into the orders of Santiago and Calatrava. Their bearing would admit them, so unmistakably are they hidalgos. Their long hair, their turned-up moustaches, their pointed beards, their steel gorgets, their corselets or their buff doublets render them in advance ancestral portraits to hang up, with their arms blazoned on the corner of the canvas, in the galleries of old castles. No one has known so well as Velasquez how to paint the gentleman with such superb familiarity, and, so to speak, as equal to equal. He is by no means a poor, embarrassed artist who only sees his models while they are posing and has never lived with them. He follows them in the privacy of the royal apartments, on great hunting-parties, and in ceremonies of pomp. He knows their bearing, their gestures, their attitudes, and their physiognomy; he himself is one of the King's favourites (*privados del rey*). Like



THE SURRENDER OF BREDA.
*Velasquez.*

themselves, and even more than they, he has *les grandes et les petites entrées*.[1] The nobility of Spain having Velasquez for a portrait-painter could not say, like the lion of the fable: "Ah! if the lions only knew how to paint."

Velasquez takes his place naturally between Titian and Van Dyck as a painter of portraits. His colour is solidly and profoundly harmonious, without any false luxury and with no need of glitter. His magnificence is that of ancient hereditary fortunes. It has tranquillity, equality, and intimacy. We find no violent reds, greens, nor blues, no upstart glitter, no brilliant gew-gaws. All is restrained and subdued, but with a warm tone like that of old gold, or with a grey tone like the dead sheen of family silver. Gaudy and loud things will do for upstarts, but Don Diego Velasquez de Silva is too true a gentleman to make himself an object of remark in that manner, and, let us say, too good a painter also. Although a realist, he brings to his art a lofty grandeur, a disdain of useless detail, and an intentional sacrifice that plainly reveal the sovereign master. These sacrifices were not always those that another painter would have made. Velasquez chose to put in evidence what, it sometimes seems, should have been left in shadow. He extinguishes and he illuminates with apparent caprice, but the effect always justifies him.

The correctness of his eye was such that while he only pretended to be copying, he brought the soul to the surface and painted the inner and the outer man at the same time. His portraits relate the secret *Mémoires* of the Spanish court better than all the chroniclers. Let him represent

[1] Private audiences of the King.

them in gala dress, riding their genets, in hunting-costume, an arquebuse in their hand, a greyhound at their feet, and we recognize in these wan figures of kings, queens, and infantas, with pale faces, red lips, and massive chins the degeneracy of Charles V. and the falling away of exhausted dynasties. Although a court-painter, he has not flattered his royal models. However, despite the brainlessness of the type, the quality of these high personages would never be doubted. It is not that he did not know how to paint genius; the portrait of the Count-Duke of Olivares, so noble, so imperious, and so full of authority, unanswerably proves that, unable to lend any fire to these sad lords, he gives them a cold majesty, a wearied dignity, a gesture and pose of etiquette, and then envelops all with his magnificent colour; that was full payment for the protection of his crowned friend. M. Paul de Saint-Victor has somewhere called Victor Hugo "The Spanish Grandee of poetry;" may we not be permitted to call Velasquez "The Spanish Grandee of painting"? No qualification would suit him better.

As we have said, Velasquez was Court Chamberlain, and it was he who was charged with the preparation of the lodgings of the King in the trip that Philip IV. made to Irun to deliver the Infanta Doña Maria-Teresa to the King of France. It was he who had decorated and ornamented the pavilion where the interview of the two kings took place in the Île des Faisans. Velasquez was distinguished among the crowd of courtiers by his personal dignity, the elegance, the richness, and the good taste of his costumes on which he arranged with art the diamonds and jewels, —

gifts of the sovereigns; but on his return to Madrid, he fell ill with fatigue and died on the 7th of August, 1660. His widow, Doña Juana Pacheco, only survived him seven days and was interred near him in the parish of San Juan. The funeral of Velasquez was splendid; great personages, knights of the military orders, the King's household, and the artists were present sad and pensive, as if they felt that with Velasquez they were interring Spanish art.

*Guide de l'Amateur au Musée du Louvre* (Paris, 1882).

## THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

### (*MURILLO*)

AIMÉ GIRON

AFTER her 3,700 battles with the Moors and the conquest of Granada, Spain had a splendid outburst of literary and artistic glory. In painting, the four schools of Valencia, Toledo, Madrid, and Seville suddenly shone forth with that conception of the real and that care for sharp relief which they owed to the brilliancy of their sunshine, while amid the fogs of the North the outline is more wavering and the vision less clear. Under the influence of this original realism, their works instinctively reproduced that two-fold character which the land of Spain, smiling in her valleys and savage in her mountains, shows in sharp contrast. But the Spaniards are, in truth, much more realistic in their execution than in their inspiration.

The school of Seville, founded by Luis de Vargas, counted among its illustrious masters the greatest painter of that sunlit and passionate Andalusia, Murillo (Bartolomé-Estéban), 1617–1682, Spain's most popular painter, "the painter of the Conceptions," as she called him.

His uncle, Juan del Castillo, a mediocre artist but a good teacher, initiated him into his dry, stiff, and hard manner, — that of the old Florentine school. In his studio young Estéban Murillo had young Pedro de Moya as a



The Immaculate Conception.
*Murillo.*

fellow-student. One day the former took a fancy to go to Cadiz, where, miserable enough, he painted on pieces of serge some Madonnas for traffic in the West Indies, while the latter went to London to work in Van Dyck's studio. On his return Pedro de Moya brought several studies of the Flemish master, and Murillo, suddenly revolutionized and suddenly illuminated, no longer dreamed of anything but of going to Flanders or Italy, passing — happily — through Madrid. In Madrid, the Velasquez of the Court of Charles II. stopped him on the way, gave him admission to the royal collections, where he copied Titian, Veronese, and Rubens, and then opened his purse to him, and, lastly, revealed the secrets of his mighty art.

Thus taught and thus inspired, Murillo returned to Seville, where he settled once for all, immuring himself in his studio, where — modest, timid, and gentle — he lived with that single love for his art which soon enriched him, two years later adding to it the adoration of his wife, a noble lady of Pilas. It was from this studio that almost all of his laborious, numerous, and superb works issued, sometimes scarcely signed. From the very beginning, Murillo possessed all the qualities of a great master, and henceforth we have only to separate his own personality and originality.

Murillo had three periods, as he also had three styles according to the nature of the subjects he had to treat: the first period, under the influence of the Florentine formulas of Juan del Castillo, was somewhat that of happy and masterly imitations; the second, under the memories of Van Dyck, brought back by Pedro de Moya and of the

copies painted at Madrid, belongs to the Flemish school. But, at thirty-five, in full possession of his genius, he reveals *himself*, with his superb colouring, his consummate ease, his great science, his rich and inexhaustible imagination, his exquisite and tender sentiment, and his harmony, often produced with feminine delicacy and childish grace, with his vigour, his trivialities, and his mysticism.

The genius of Murillo, in fact, obeyed a double current, which carried him forward, on the one hand towards the sky, and on the other towards the earth, towards the Catholic ideal or towards vulgar realities, gentle Madonnas alternately with knavish beggars. Very sincerely and observantly religious, with the contemplative soul of the land of great men and great mysteries, Saint John of the Cross and Saint Theresa, this chaste artist, who never painted a nude woman, has the exalted sentiment of faith of the Spanish artists, a sentiment which is somewhat ennobled by their realism of nature.

"Why don't you finish that Christ?" asked one of his friends.

"I am waiting until he comes to speak to me," replied Murillo.

With these works he enriched the chapter-house of the Seville Cathedral, the Hospital de la Caridad, that of the Hospital de los Venerables, the convents of the Capuchins, the Augustines, etc.

I have said that Murillo had three styles, almost three pencils, not like the pencils of gold, of silver, and of iron that the Venetians attributed to the unequal genius of Tintoret, but in sympathy with the subjects he had to treat.

The Spaniards have distinguished and qualified these styles as follows: *Frio*, *calido y vaporoso*, cold, warm, and vaporous.

In the cold style he painted broadly, boldly, and frankly his beggars and his *muchachos*, so true to life and in strong relief, with a certain brutality almost approaching triviality. A very well-known work of this kind is the *Pouilleux* in the Museum of the Louvre, and a masterpiece in the Pinacothek of Munich, the Grandmother and Infant. He sought these types in some old Moorish dwelling, on the deck of a ship from Tunis or Tripoli anchored in a Spanish harbour, or in among a band of wandering *Gitanos* on the banks of the Guadalquivir.

In the vaporous manner, which he used in rendering the ecstasies of the saints, he painted (under indescribable transparencies of light and atmospheric shade which is really only extinguished light), *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*, *The Angel Kitchen* (Miracle of San Diego) running through several scales of tones in a marvellous chord and softening all the outlines "dulcemente perdidos," as Céan Bermudez says.

In his warm style, come his *Annunciations*, *Conceptions*, and all those gentle and graceful Madonnas, sweet and poetic young mothers rather than divine Virgins "whom Jews might kiss and Infidels adore," as Pope says, and which remind us of Correggio's effeminacy, unknown to Murillo, and in which he plays with ease with harmonies, contrasts, and reflections of colour.

*The Immaculate Conception*, in the National Museum of the Louvre, is of this style. Certainly it is not more beauti-

ful than the *Conception* in Madrid, of such extraordinary brilliance, and of such a virginal expression of innocence, piety, and melancholy; and above all not more beautiful than that of Seville — *The Great Conception*, or the *Pearl of Conceptions*, making the Virgin Mother's face into a beautiful and intense face of an archangel. That had its day of resounding triumph.

Every one knows that Marshal Soult accepted this work in Spain for the pardon of two monks condemned to be hanged as spies. On the 29th of May, 1852, this canvas was sold at auction. Around it the greatest nations were represented with their rival gold, and loud applause accompanied each royal bid. When, for the sum of 615,300 francs, it was knocked down — "To France, gentlemen!" cried the Count de Nieuwerkerke — then broke forth the delirium of a battle won.

In a diaphanous atmosphere gilded with an invisible clearness as of Paradise, the winged heads and bodies of little angels are moving: the former gracefully grouped, the latter boldly and skilfully disposed. The celestial infants have followed all the way to the earth the rays of celestial light in its elusive gradations of colour under its imperceptible glazing. In the centre, in the act of ascent, the Virgin rises in ecstasy. One corner of a cloud, the crescent moon, and a masterly group of little angels, naked and enraptured, bear the Immaculate aloft. Gracefully and statuesquely posed, and broadly draped in a white robe with sober folds enriched by an ample scarf of light blue, she modestly hides her feet under the drapery and chastely crosses her hands over the breast in which she feels the

conception of the Son of God operating. Her head under its dishevelled waves of black hair, a little turned back and bending slightly to one side, is raised to heaven with uplifted eyes and open mouth, as if to receive in every sense the flow of the spirit. The face, in the exquisite sweetness of a surrender to piety, reflects the bliss of Faith, of mystical voluptuousness, and divine ecstasy. The expression is religious, but the Virgin is human, and full of life in the firmness of her lines and the warmth of her flesh-tints. Beneath the suppleness of the drawing and the soft touches we recognize in Mary the Immaculate, the woman and even the Andalusian.

The whole work is a most harmonious and well-balanced composition, of the greatest opulence of colour, solidly laid in, and here and there lightly glazed over in the Venetian manner; a superb work this, in which Murillo has found the right point where his idealism and his materialism meet and mingle.

If I remember rightly, we know one hundred and thirty canvases of Murillo, to any one of which our admiration hesitates to award the pre-eminence, — and if the crown of laurels which a Pope laid upon the funeral couch of Raphael is the consecration of the sovereignty of the painter of Urbino for History, the universally popular name of Murillo has also sanctified the incontestable genius of the painter of Seville.

Jouin, *Chefs-d'œuvre: Peinture, Sculpture Architecture* (Paris, 1895-97).

## ST. FRANCIS BEFORE THE SOLDAN

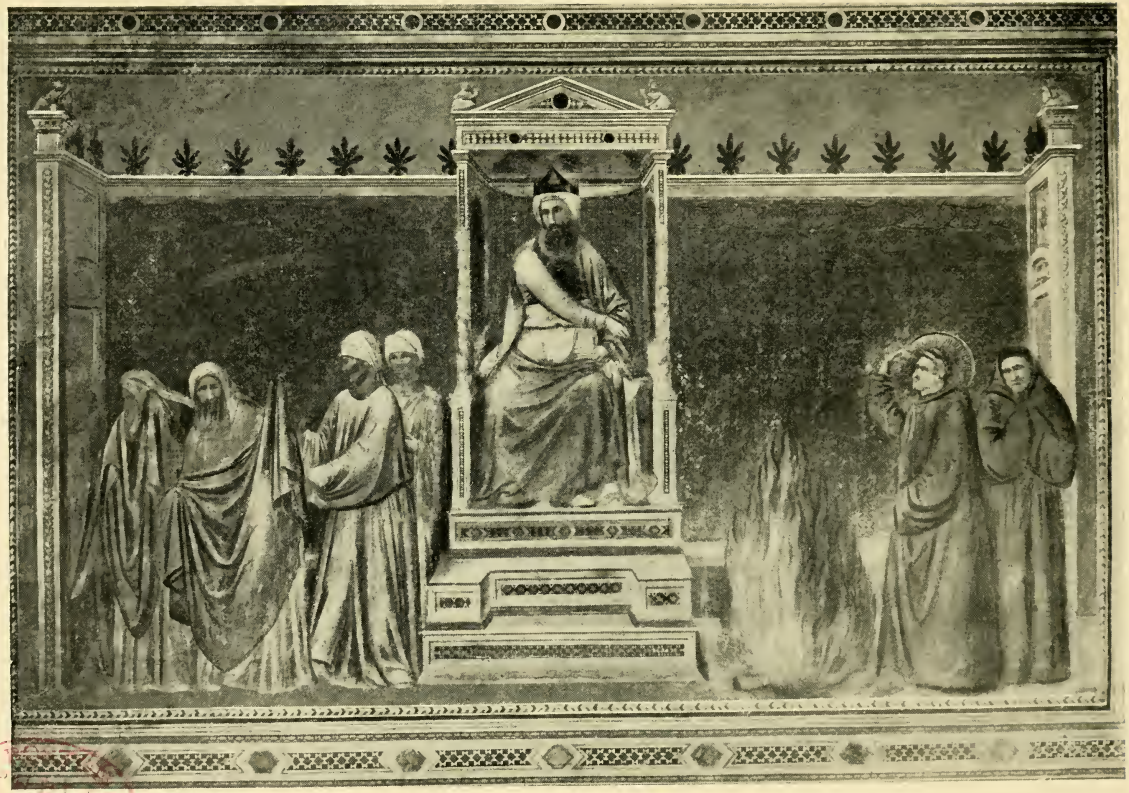
### (*GIOTTO*)

### JOHN RUSKIN

IT is a characteristic — (as far as I know, quite a universal one) — of the great masters, that they never expect you to look at them; — seem always rather surprised if you want to; and not overpleased. Tell them you are going to hang their picture at the upper end of the table at the next great City dinner, and that Mr. So-and-So will make a speech about it; — you produce no impression upon them whatever, or an unfavourable one. The chances are ten to one they send you the most rubbishy thing they can find in their lumber-room. But send for one of them in a hurry, and tell him the rats have gnawed a nasty hole behind the parlour door, and you want it plastered and painted over; — and he does you a masterpiece which the world will peep behind your door to look at for ever.

I have no time to tell you why this is so; nor do I know why, altogether, but so it is.

Giotto, then, is sent for, to paint this high chapel: I am not sure if he chose his own subjects from the life of St. Francis: I think so, — but of course can't reason on the guess securely. At all events, he would have much of his own way in the matter.



St. Francis before the Soldan.

*Giotto.*

Now you must observe that painting a Gothic chapel rightly is just the same thing as painting a Greek vase rightly. The chapel is merely the vase turned upside-down, and outside-in. The principles of decoration are exactly the same. Your decoration is to be proportioned to the size of your vase; to be together delightful when you look at the cup, or chapel, as a whole; to be various and entertaining when you turn the cup round; (you turn *yourself* round in the chapel;) and to bend its heads and necks of figures about, as best it can, over the hollows, and ins and outs, so that anyhow, whether too long or too short — possible or impossible — they may be living, and full of grace. You will also please take it on my word to-day — in another morning walk you shall have proof of it — that Giotto was a pure Etruscan-Greek of the Thirteenth Century: converted indeed to worship St. Francis instead of Heracles; but as far as vase-painting goes, precisely the Etruscan he was before. This is nothing else than a large, beautiful, coloured Etruscan vase you have got, inverted over your heads like a diving-bell. The roof has the symbols of the three virtues of labour — Poverty, Chastity, Obedience.

A. Highest on the left side, looking to the window. The life of St. Francis begins in his renunciation of the world.

B. Highest on the right side. His new life is approved and ordained by the authority of the church.

C. Central on the left side. He preaches to his own disciples.

D. Central on the right side. He preaches to the heathen.

E. Lowest on the left side. His burial.

F. Lowest on the right side. His power after death.

Besides these six subjects, there are, on the sides of the window, the four great Franciscan saints, St. Louis of France, St. Louis of Toulouse, St. Clare, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary. The Soldan, with an ordinary opera-glass, you may see clearly enough; and I think it will be first well to notice some technical points in it.

If the little virgin on the stairs of the temple reminded you of one composition of Titian's, this Soldan should, I think, remind you of all that is greatest in Titian; so forcibly, indeed, that for my own part, if I had been told that a careful early fresco by Titian had been recovered in Santa Croce, I could have believed both report and my own eyes, more quickly than I have been able to admit that this is indeed by Giotto. It is so great that — had its principles been understood — there was in reality nothing more to be taught of art in Italy; nothing to be invented afterwards except Dutch effects of light.

That there is "no effect of light" here arrived at, I beg you at once to observe as a most important lesson. The subject is St. Francis challenging the Soldan's Magi, —fire-worshippers — to pass with him through the fire, which is blazing red at his feet. It is so hot that the two Magi on the other side of the throne shield their faces. But it is represented simply as a red mass of writhing forms of flame; and casts no firelight whatever. There is no ruling colour on anybody's nose; there are no black shadows under anybody's chin; there are no Rembrandtesque gradations of gloom, or glitterings of sword-hilt and armour.

Is this ignorance, think you, in Giotto, and pure artlessness? He was now a man in middle life, having passed all his days in painting, and professedly, and almost contentiously, painting things as he saw them. Do you suppose he never saw fire cast firelight? — and he the friend of Dante! who of all poets is the most subtle in his sense of every kind of effect of light — though he has been thought by the public to know that of fire only. Again and again, his ghosts wonder that there is no shadow cast by Dante's body; and is the poet's friend *because* a painter, likely, therefore, not to have known that mortal substance casts shadow, and terrestrial flame, light? Nay, the passage in the *Purgatorio* where the shadows from the morning sunshine make the flames redder, reaches the accuracy of Newtonian science, and does Giotto, think you, all the while, see nothing of the sort?

The fact was, he saw light so intensely that he never for an instant thought of painting it. He knew that to paint the sun was as impossible as to stop it; and he was no trickster, trying to find out ways of seeming to do what he did not. I can paint a rose, — yes; and I will. I can't paint a red-hot coal; and I won't try to, nor seem to. This was just as natural and certain a process of thinking with *him*, as the honesty of it, and true science, were impossible to the false painters of the Sixteenth Century.

Nevertheless, what his art can honestly do to make you feel as much as he wants you to feel, about this fire, he will do; and that studiously. That the fire be *luminous* or not, is no matter just now. But that the fire is *hot*, he would have you to know. Now, will you notice what

colours he has used in the whole picture. First, the blue background, necessary to unite it with the other three subjects, is reduced to the smallest possible space. St. Francis must be in grey, for that is his dress; also the attendant of one of the Magi is in grey; but so warm, that, if you saw it by itself, you would call it brown. The shadow behind the throne, which Giotto knows he *can* paint, and therefore does, is grey also. The rest of the picture[1] in at least six-sevenths of its area — is either crimson, gold, orange, purple, or white, all as warm as Giotto could paint them; and set off by minute spaces only of intense black, — the Soldan's fillet at the shoulders, his eyes, beard, and the points necessary in the golden pattern behind. And the whole picture is one glow.

A single glance round at the other subjects will convince you of the special character in this; but you will recognize also that the four upper subjects in which St. Francis's life and zeal are shown, are all in comparatively warm colours, while the two lower ones — of the death, and the visions after it — have been kept as definitely sad and cold.

Necessarily, you might think, being full of monks' dresses. Not so. Was there any need for Giotto to have put the priest at the foot of the dead body, with the black banner stooped over it in the shape of a grave? Might he not, had he chosen, in either fresco, have made the celestial visions brighter? Might not St. Francis have appeared in the centre of a celestial glory to the dreaming Pope, or his soul been seen of the poor monk, rising

[1] The floor has been repainted; but though its grey is now heavy and cold, it cannot kill the splendour of the rest.

through more radiant clouds? Look, however, how radiant, in the small space allowed out of the blue, they are in reality. You cannot anywhere see a lovelier piece of Giottesque colour, though here you have to mourn over the smallness of the piece, and its isolation. For the face of St. Francis himself is repainted, and all the blue sky; but the clouds and four sustaining angels are hardly retouched at all, and their iridescent and exquisitely graceful wings are left with really very tender and delicate care by the restorer of the sky. And no one but Giotto or Turner could have painted them.

For in all his use of opalescent and warm colour, Giotto is exactly like Turner, as, in his swift expressional power, he is like Gainsborough. All the other Italian religious painters work out their expression with toil; he only can give it with a touch. All the other great Italian colourists see only the beauty of colour, but Giotto also its brightness. And none of the others, except Tintoret, understood to the full its symbolic power; but with those — Giotto and Tintoret — there is always, not only a colour harmony, but a colour secret. It is not merely to make the picture glow, but to remind you that St. Francis preaches to a fire-worshipping king, that Giotto covers the wall with purple and scarlet; — and above, in the dispute at Assisi, the angry father is dressed in red, varying like passion; and the robe with which his protector embraces St. Francis, blue, symbolizing the peace of Heaven. Of course certain conventional colours were traditionally employed by all painters; but only Giotto and Tintoret invent a symbolism of their own for every picture. Thus

in Tintoret's picture of the fall of the manna, the figure of God the Father is entirely robed in white, contrary to all received custom; in that of Moses striking the rock, it is surrounded by a rainbow. Of Giotto's symbolism in colour at Assisi I have given account elsewhere.[1]

You are not to think, therefore, the difference between the colour of the upper and lower frescos unintentional. The life of St. Francis was always full of joy and triumph. His death, in great suffering, weariness, and extreme humility. The tradition of him reverses that of Elijah: living, he is seen in the chariot of fire; dying, he submits to more than the common sorrow of death.

There is, however, much more than a difference in colour between the upper and lower frescos. There is a difference in manner which I cannot account for; and above all, a very singular difference in skill, — indicating, it seems to me, that the two lower were done long before the others, and afterwards united and harmonized with them. It is of no interest to the general reader to pursue this question; but one point he can notice quickly, that the lower frescos depend much on a mere black or brown outline of the features, while the faces above are evenly and completely painted in the most accomplished Venetian manner: — and another, respecting the management of the draperies, contains much interest for us.

Giotto never succeeded, to the very end of his days, in representing a figure lying down, and at ease. It is one of the most curious points in all his character. Just the thing which he could study from nature without the smallest

[1] *Fors Clavigera* for September, 1874.

hindrance, is the thing he never can paint; while subtleties of form and gesture, which depend absolutely on their momentariness, and actions in which no model can stay for an instant he seizes with infallible accuracy.

Not only has the sleeping Pope, in the right hand lower fresco, his head laid uncomfortably on his pillow, but all the clothes on him are in awkward angles, even Giotto's instinct for lines of drapery failing him altogether when he has to lay it on a reposing figure. But look at the folds of the Soldan's robe over his knees. None could be more beautiful or right; and it is to me wholly inconceivable that the two paintings should be within even twenty years of each other in date — the skill in the upper one is so supremely greater. We shall find, however, more than mere truth in its casts of drapery, if we examine them.

They are so simply right, in the figure of the Soldan, that we do not think of them; — we see him only, not his dress. But we see dress first, in the figures of the discomfited Magi. Very fully draped personages these, indeed, — with trains, it appears four yards long, and bearers of them.

The one nearest the Soldan has done his devoir as bravely as he could; would fain go up to the fire, but cannot; is forced to shield his face, though he has not turned back. Giotto gives him full sweeping breadth of fold; what dignity he can; — a man faithful to his profession, at all events.

The next one has no such courage. Collapsed altogether, he has nothing more to say for himself or his creed. Giotto hangs the cloak upon him in Ghirlandajo's fashion, as from a peg, but with ludicrous narrowness of fold. Literally, he

is a "shut-up" Magus — closed like a fan. He turns his head away, hopelessly. And the last Magus shows nothing but his back, disappearing through the door.

Opposed to them, in a modern work, you would have had a St. Francis standing as high as he could in his sandals, contemptuous, denunciatory; magnificently showing the Magi the door. No such thing, says Giotto. A somewhat mean man; disappointing even in presence — even in feature; I do not understand his gesture, pointing to his forehead — perhaps meaning, "my life, or my head, upon the truth of this." The attendant monk behind him is terror-struck; but will follow his master. The dark Moorish servants of the Magi show no emotion — will arrange their masters' trains as usual, and decorously sustain their retreat.

Lastly, for the Soldan himself. In a modern work, you would assuredly have had him staring at St. Francis with his eyebrows up, or frowning thunderously at the Magi, with them bent as far down as they would go. Neither of these aspects does he bear according to Giotto. A perfect gentleman and king, he looks on his Magi with quiet eyes of decision; he is much the noblest person in the room — though an infidel, the true hero of the scene, far more so than St. Francis. It is evidently the Soldan whom Giotto wants you to think of mainly, in this picture of Christian missionary work.

He does not altogether take the view of the Heathen which you would get in an Exeter Hall meeting. Does not expatiate on their ignorance, their blackness, or their nakedness. Does not at all think of the Florentine Isling-

ton and Pentonville, as inhabited by persons in every respect superior to the Kings of the East; nor does he imagine every other religion but his own to be log-worship. Probably the people who really worship logs — whether in Persia or Pentonville — will be left to worship logs to their hearts' content, thinks Giotto. But to those who worship *God*, and who have obeyed the laws of heaven written in their hearts, and numbered the stars of it visible to them, — to these, a nearer star may rise; and a higher God be revealed.

You are to note, therefore, that Giotto's Soldan is the type of all noblest religion and law, in countries where the name of Christ has not been preached. There was no doubt what king or people should be chosen: the country of the three Magi had already been indicated by the miracle of Bethlehem; and the religion and morality of Zoroaster were the purest, and in spirit the oldest, in the heathen world. Therefore, when Dante in the nineteenth and twentieth books of the Paradise, gives his final interpretation of the law of human and divine justice in relation to the gospel of Christ — the lower and enslaved body of the heathen being represented by St. Philip's convert ("Christians like these the Ethiop shall condemn") — the noblest state of heathenism is at once chosen, as by Giotto: "What may the *Persians* say unto *your* kings?" Compare also Milton, —

> "At the Soldan's chair,
> Defied the best of Paynim chivalry."

*Mornings in Florence* (Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent, 1875).

## LILITH

### (*ROSSETTI*)

### ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

"Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve),
That, ere the snake's her sweet tongue could deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
And, subtly by herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright net she can weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

"The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft-shed sleep shall snare?
Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair."

*Dante Gabriel Rossetti.*

IT is well-known that the painter of whom I now propose to speak has never suffered exclusion or acceptance at the hand of any academy. To such acceptance or such rejection all other men of any note have been and may be liable. It is not less well known that his work must always hold its place as second in significance and value to no work done by any painter of his time. Among the many great works of Mr. D. G. Rossetti, I know of none greater than his two latest. These are types of



LILITH.
*Rossetti.*

sensual beauty and spiritual, the siren and the sibyl. The one is a woman of the type of Adam's first wife; she is a living Lilith with ample splendour of redundant hair;

> "She excels
> All women in the magic of her locks;
> And when she winds them round a young man's neck
> She will not ever set him free again."

Clothed in soft white garments, she draws out through a comb the heavy mass of hair like thick spun gold to fullest length; her head leans back half sleepily, superb and satiate with its own beauty; the eyes are languid, without love in them or hate; the sweet luxurious mouth has the patience of pleasure fulfilled and complete, the warm repose of passion sure of its delight. Outside, as seen in the glimmering mirror, there is full summer; the deep and glowing leaves have drunk in the whole strength of the sun. The sleepy splendour of the picture is a fit raiment for the idea incarnate of faultless fleshly beauty and peril of pleasure unavoidable. For this serene and sublime sorceress there is no life but of the body; with spirit (if spirit there be) she can dispense. Were it worth her while for any word to divide those terrible tender lips, she too might say with the hero of the most perfect and exquisite book of modern times — *Mademoiselle de Maupin* — "*Je trouve la terre aussi belle que le ciel, et je pense que la correction de la forme est la vertu.*" Of evil desire or evil impulse she has nothing; and nothing of good. She is indifferent, equable, magnetic; she charms and draws down the souls of men by pure force of absorption, in no wise wilful or malignant; outside herself she cannot live, she cannot even see: and because of

this she attracts and subdues all men at once in body and in spirit. Beyond the mirror she cares not to look, and could not.

> "*Ma mia suora Rahel mai non si smaga,*
> *Dal suo miraglio, e siede tutto 'l giorno.*"

So, rapt in no spiritual contemplation, she will sit to all time, passive and perfect: the outer light of a sweet spring day flooding and filling the massive gold of her hair. By the reflection in a deep mirror of fervent foliage from without, the chief chord of stronger colour is touched in this picture; next in brilliance and force of relief is the heap of curling and tumbling hair on which the sunshine strikes; the face and head of the siren are withdrawn from the full stroke of the light.

*Essays and Studies* (London, 1875).

## ADORATION OF THE MAGI

### (*DÜRER*)

MORIZ THAUSING

ITALY, that beautiful enchantress, whose irresistible charms have caused many of Germany's greatest men to forget their native land, and array themselves beneath her colours, did not fail to exercise over Dürer, in the course of the year and more that he spent beyond the Alps, that subtle influence which elevates the understanding and expands the mind. He thought, as did Goethe after him, with a sort of shudder, of his return to cloudy skies, and of the less easy nature of the life which awaited him at home. But, though he enjoyed himself very much at Venice, and gave in willingly in many external things to the prevailing taste there, the essential nature of his art remained untouched by foreign influences, and he returned to Nuremberg unitalianized, and true to his original principles. The fame which his works enjoyed in Italy only encouraged him to continue in the path he had already chosen. Perhaps the exuberance of life displayed in Venetian painting inspired him, even under the altered circumstances of his home life, with the determination to devote all his energies to large easel pictures. To the *Adoration of the Magi* in 1504, and the *Feast of the Rosary* in 1506, succeeded the

*Adam and Eve* in 1507, the *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand Saints* in 1508, the *Assumption of the Virgin* in 1509, and the All Saints picture or *Adoration of the Trinity* of 1511. Dürer was at the height of his power when he created these masterpieces, small, indeed, in number, but remarkable for their conception, composition, and entire execution by his own hand. To complete a large picture to his satisfaction, Dürer required the same time as Schiller did for a tragedy, viz., a whole year. . . .

It was in the year 1504 that Dürer finished the first great picture, which, from its excellent state of preservation, must have been entirely executed with the greatest care by his own hand, even to the most minute detail. This picture is the *Adoration of the Magi*, now in the Tribune of the Uffizi at Florence. Mary sits on the left, looking like the happiest of German mothers, with the enchantingly naïve Infant on her knees; the three Wise Men from the East, in magnificent dresses glittering with gold, approach, deeply moved, and with various emotions depicted on their countenances, while the whole creation around seems to share their joyous greeting, even to the flowers and herbs, and to the great stag-beetle and two white butterflies, which are introduced after the manner of Wolgemut. The sunny green on copse and mountain throws up the group better than the conventional nimbus could have done. The fair-haired Virgin, draped entirely in blue with a white veil, recalls vividly the same figure in the Paumgärtner altarpiece. Aërial and linear perspective are still imperfect, but the technical treatment of the figures is as finished as in Dürer's best pictures of the later period. The outlines are sharp, the



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ADORATION OF THE MAGI.
*Dürer.*

colours very liquid, laid on without doubt in tempera, and covered with oil glazes; the whole tone exceedingly fresh, clear, and brilliant. If it was Barbari's fine work which incited Dürer to this delicate and careful method of execution, he has certainly far surpassed the Venetian, not only in form and ideas, but also in the solidity of his technique. This technique is undoubtedly of Northern origin, as is also the harmony of colour, which Dürer here realizes, and does not soon again abandon. It must not be forgotten, however, that the difference between this technique and that practised by Giovanni Bellini is one of degree and not of principle; judging at least by the unfinished painting of Giovanni's in the Uffizi, in which the design is sketched either with the pencil or brush, and the colours then laid on in tempera, and afterwards repeatedly covered with oil glazes. Dürer appears to have owed the opportunity of producing this his first masterpiece in painting to a commission from the Elector Frederick of Saxony. Christian II. presented it to the Emperor Rudolph II. in 1603, and in the last century it was sent from the imperial gallery, in exchange for the *Presentation in the Temple*, by Fra Bartolomeo, to Florence, where it now shines as a gem of German art amongst the renowned pictures in the Tribune of the Uffizi.

*The Life and Works of Albert Dürer*, translated from the German and edited by Fred. A. Eaton (London, 1882).

## MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE

### (*HOGARTH*)

AUSTIN DOBSON

NEVERTHELESS, if the main circumstances of the painter's career should still remain unaltered, there must always be a side of his work which will continue to need interpretation. In addition to painting the faults and follies of his time, he was pre-eminently the pictorial chronicler of its fashions and its furniture. The follies endure; but the fashions pass away. In our day — a day which has witnessed the demolition of Northumberland House, the disappearance of Temple Bar, and the removal of we know not what other time-honoured and venerated landmarks — much in Hogarth's plates must seem as obscure as the cartouches on Cleopatra's Needle. Much more is speedily becoming so; and without some guidance the student will scarcely venture into that dark and doubtful rookery of tortuous streets and unnumbered houses — the London of the Eighteenth Century.

Were it not beyond the reasonable compass of a methodical memoir, it would be a pleasant task to loiter for a while in that vanished London of Hogarth, of Fielding, of Garrick; — that London of Rocque's famous map of 1746, when "cits" had their country-boxes and "gazebos" at Islington and Hackney, and fine gentlemen their villas at



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MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE.

*Hogarth.*

*Marybone* and *Chelsey*; when duels were fought in the "fields" behind the British Museum, and there was a windmill at the bottom of Rathbone Place. We should find the Thames swarming with noisy watermen, and the streets with thick-calved Irish chairmen; we should see the old dusky oil-lamps lighted feebly with the oil that dribbled on the Rake when he went to Court; and the great creaking sign-boards that obscured the sky, and occasionally toppled on the heads of his Majesty's lieges beneath. We should note the sluggish kennels and the ill-paved streets; and rejoice in the additional facilities afforded for foot-passengers at the "new Buildings near *Hanover* Square." We might watch King George II. yawning in his Chapel Royal of St. James's, or follow Queen Caroline of Anspach in her walk on Constitution Hill. Or we might turn into the Mall, which is filled on summer evenings with a *Beau-Monde* of cinnamon-coloured coats and pink *négligés*. But the tour of Covent Garden (with its column and dial in the centre) would take at least a chapter, and the pilgrimage of Leicester Fields another. We should certainly assist at the Lord Mayor's Show; and we might, like better folks before us, be hopelessly engulfed in that westward-faring crowd, which, after due warning from the belfry of St. Sepulchre's, swept down the old Tyburn Road on "Execution Day" to see the last of Laurence Shirley, Earl Ferrers, or the highwayman James M'Lean. It is well, perhaps, that our limits are definitely restricted.

Moreover, much that we could do imperfectly with the pen, Hogarth has done imperishably with the graver.

Essentially metropolitan in his tastes, there is little notable in the London of his day of which he has not left us some pictorial idea. He has painted the Green Park, the Mall, and Rosamond's Pond. He has shown us Covent Garden and St. James's Street; Cheapside and Charing Cross; Tottenham-Court Road and Hog-Lane, St. Giles. He has shown us Bridewell, Bedlam, and the Fleet Prison. Through a window in one print we see the houses on old London Bridge; in another it is Temple Bar, surmounted by the blackened and ghastly relics of Jacobite traitors. He takes us to a cock-fight in Bird Cage Walk, to a dissection in Surgeons' Hall. He gives us reception-rooms in Arlington Street, counting-houses in St. Mary Axe, sky-parlours in Porridge Island, and night-cellars in Blood-Bowl Alley. He reproduces the decorations of the Rose Tavern or of the Turk's Head Bagnio as scrupulously as the monsters at Dr. Misaubin's museum in St. Martin's Lane, or the cob-web over the poor-box in Mary-le-bone Old Church. The pictures on the walls, the Chinese nondescripts on the shelves, the tables and chairs, the pipes and punch-bowls, nay, the very tobacco and snuff, have all their distinctive physiognomy and prototypes. He gives us, unromanced and unidealized, "the form and pressure," the absolute details and accessories, the actual *mise-en-scène*, of the time in which he lived.[1]

[1] "It was reserved to Hogarth to write a scene of furniture. The rake's levee-room, the nobleman's dining-room, the apartments of the husband and wife in *Marriage A-la-Mode*, the alderman's parlour, the poet's bed-chamber, and many others, are the history of the manners of the age." So says Horace Walpole (*Anecdotes*, etc., 1771, p 74), and in this, at least, he was an unimpeachable authority.

But he has done much more than this. He has peopled his canvas with its *dramatis personæ*, — with vivid portraits of the more strongly-marked actors in that cynical and sensual, brave and boastful, corrupt and patriotic age. Not, be it understood, with its Wolfes and Johnsons, — he was a humourist and a satirist, and goodness was no game for his pencil, — rather with its Lovats and Chartres, its Sarah Malcolms and its Shebbeares. He was a moralist after the manner of eighteenth-century morality, not savage like Swift, not ironical like Fielding, not tender-hearted at times like Johnson and Goldsmith; but unrelenting, uncompromising, uncompassionate. He drew vice and its consequences in a thoroughly literal and business-like way, neither sparing nor extenuating its details, wholly insensible to its seductions, incapable of flattering it even for a moment, preoccupied simply with catching its precise contortion of pleasure or of pain. In all his delineations, as in that famous design of Prud'hon's, we see Justice and Vengeance following hard upon the criminal. . . .

A hint of the new series had already been given in the *Battle of the Pictures*, where the second scene, still inoffensively reposing upon the easel, is wantonly assaulted by a copy of the *Aldobrandini Marriage*. In April following the set of engravings was issued, the subscription ticket being the etching of heads known as *Characters and Caricaturas*. Plates I. and VI. were engraved by Scotin, Plates II. and III. by Baron, and Plates IV. and V. by Ravenet. Exactly two years earlier, Hogarth had heralded them by the following notification in the *London Daily Post, and General Advertiser* of April 2nd, 1743:

"Mr. HOGARTH intends to publish by Subscription, SIX PRINTS from Copper-Plates, engrav'd by the best Masters in Paris, after his own Paintings; representing a Variety of *Modern Occurrences in High-Life*, and called MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE. Particular Care will be taken, that there may not be the least Objection to the Decency or Elegancy of the whole Work, and that none of the Characters represented shall be personal." Then follow the terms of subscription. The last quoted lines are probably a bark at some forgotten detraction, and if not actually ironical, doubtless about as sincere as Fielding's promise, in the Prologue to his first comedy, not to offend the ladies. Those who had found inelegancy and indecency in the previous productions of the painter, would still discover the same defects in the masterpiece he now submitted to the public. And although it may be said that the "characters" represented are not "personal" in a satirical sense, his precautions, as he himself tells us, "did not prevent a likeness being found for each head, for a general character will always bear some resemblance to a particular one."

But what, no doubt, interested his critical contemporaries even more than these preliminary protestations, was the painter's promise to represent, in his new work, "a variety of modern occurrences in high-life." Here, it may be admitted, was a proposition which certainly savoured of temerity. What could one whose pencil had scarcely travelled beyond the limits of St. Giles's, know of the inner secrets of St. James's? A Hervey or a Beauclerk, or even a Fielding, might have sufficed; but a Hogarth of Leicester Fields, whose only pretence to distinction (as High Life

conceives it) was that he had run away with Thornhill's handsome daughter, — what special title had he to depict that charmed region of cards and folly, ringed with its long-resounding knockers, and flambeau-carrying footmen! This was, however, to reckon without genius, which overleaps loftier barriers than these. It is true that the English Novel of Manners, which has since stimulated so many artists, had only just made its appearance; and *Pamela* and *Joseph Andrews* but falteringly foreshadowed *Clarissa* and *Tom Jones*. Yet there is nothing in the story of *Marriage A-la-Mode* which was beyond the powers of a *spectator ab extra*, always provided he were fairly acquainted with the Modelys and Wildairs of the stage, and the satires of Johnson and Pope. The plot, like that of all masterpieces, is extremely simple. An impoverished nobleman who marries his son to a rich citizen's daughter; a husband who, pursuing his own equivocal pleasures, resigns his wife to the temptations of opportunity; a foregone sequel and a tragic issue: — this material is of the oldest, and could make but slender claim to originality. Submitted to Colman or Garrick as the *scenario* of a play for Yates and Mrs. Woffington, it would probably have been rejected as pitifully threadbare. Yet combined and developed under the brush of Hogarth, set in an atmosphere that makes it as vivid as nature itself, decorated with surprising fidelity, and enlivened by all the resources of the keenest humour, it passes out of the line of mere transcripts of life, and, retaining the merits of the specific and particular, becomes a representative and typical work, as articulate to-day, as direct and unhesitating in its teaching, as it was when it was first offered to the world.

How well-preserved, even now, these wonderful pictures are! It would almost seem as if Time, unreasoning in his anger, had determined to ignore in every way the audacious artist who treated him with such persistent indignity. Look at them in the National Gallery. Look, too, at the cracks and fissures in the Wilkies, the soiled rainbows of Turner, — the bituminous riding-habit of Lady Douro in Sir Edwin's *Story of Waterloo*. But these paintings of William Hogarth are well-nigh as fresh to-day as when, new from the easel, they found their fortunate purchaser in Mr. Lane of Hillingdon. They are not worked like a Denner, it is true, and the artist is often less solicitous about his method than about the result of it; yet they are soundly, straightforwardly, and skilfully executed. Lady Bingley's red hair, Carestini's nostril, are shown in the simplest and directest manner. Everywhere the desired effect is exactly produced, and without effort. Take, as an illustration, the inkstand in the first scene, with its bell and sand-caster. In these days it would be a patient *trompe-l'œil*, probably better done than the figures using it. Here it is merely indicated, not elaborated; it holds its exact place as a piece of furniture, and nothing more. And at this point it may be observed that if in the ensuing descriptions we should speak of colour, the reader will remember we are describing, not the performances of Messrs. Ravenet and the rest, but Hogarth's original pictures at Trafalgar Square. It is the more necessary to bear this in mind, because, besides being reversed, the paintings frequently differ in detail from the engravings.

The first of the series represents the signing of the mar-

riage contract. The scene, as the artist is careful to signify by the ostentatious coronets on the furniture and accessories (they are to be discerned even on the crutches), is laid in the house of an earl, who, with his gouty foot swathed in flannels, seems with a superb — if somewhat stiff-jointed — dignity to be addressing certain pompous observations respecting himself and his pedigree (dating from William the Conqueror) to a sober-looking personage opposite, who, horn-spectacles on nose, is peering at the endorsement of the "Marriage Settlem^t of the R^t Hon^ble. Lord Vincent [Squanderfield]." [1] This second figure, which is that of a London merchant, with its turned-in toes, the point of the sword-sheath between the legs, and the awkward constraint of its attitude, forms an admirable contrast to the other. A massive gold chain denotes the wearer to be an alderman. Between the two is a third person, perhaps the merchant's confidential clerk or cashier, who holds out a "Mortgage" to the Earl. Gold and notes lie upon the table, where are also an inkstand, sealing-wax, and a lighted candle in which a "thief" is conspicuous. At the back of this trio is the betrothed couple — the earl's son and the alderman's daughter. It is, in fact, an alliance of *sacs et parchemins*, in which the young people are involved rather than interested. The lady, who looks young and pretty in her bridal-dress, wears a mingled expression of *mauvaise honte* and distaste for her position, and trifles with the ring, which she has strung upon her handkerchief, while a brisk and well-built young lawyer, who trims a pen, bends towards her with a whispered compliment. Meantime the

[1] The name is added in the print.

Viscount — a frail, effeminate-looking figure, holding an open snuff-box, from which he affectedly lifts a pinch — turns from his *fiancée* with a smirk of complacent foppery towards a pier-glass at his side. His wide-cuffed coat is light blue, his vest is loaded with embroidery. He wears an enormous *solitaire*, and has high red heels to his shoes. Before him, in happy parody of the ill-matched pair, are two dogs in coupling-links: — the bitch sits up, alert and curious, her companion is lying down. The only other figure is that of an old lawyer, who, with a plan in his hand, and a gesture of contempt or wonder, looks through an open window at an ill-designed and partly-erected building, in front of which several idle servants are lounging or sitting. Like Pope's "Visto," the Earl has "a taste," and his taste, interrupted for the moment by lack of funds, is the ruinous one of bricks and mortar.

The pictures on the wall exemplify and satirize the fashion of the time. The largest is a portrait in the French style of one of the earl's ancestors, who traverses the canvas triumphantly. A cannon explodes below him, a comet is seen above; and in his right hand, notwithstanding his cuirass and voluminous Queen-Anne peruke, he brandishes the thunderbolt of Jupiter. *Judith and Holofernes*, *St. Sebastian*, *The Murder of Abel*, *David and Goliath*, *The Martyrdom of St. Laurence*, are some of the rest, all of which, it is perhaps needless to note, belong to those "dismal dark subjects, neither entertaining nor ornamental," against which we have already heard the painter inveigh. Upon the ceiling, with a nice sense of decorative fitness, is *Pharaoh in the Red Sea*. From a sconce at the side,

a Gorgon surveys the proceedings with astonishment. Hogarth has used a similar idea in the *Strolling Actresses*, where the same mask seems horrified at the airy freedom of the lightly-clad lady who there enacts the part of Diana.

In the picture of the *Contract*, the young people and "Counsellor Silvertongue," as he has been christened by the artist, are placed in close proximity. These are the real actors in the drama. Building *immemor sepulcri*, the old earl had but few years to live. Henceforth he is seen no more; and the alderman reappears only at the end of the story. . . .

We have only dealt briefly with these concluding pictures, the decorations and accessories of which are to the full as minute and effective as those of the one that precede them. The furniture of the bagnio, with its portrait of Moll Flanders humorously continued by the sturdy legs of a Jewish soldier in the tapestry *Judgment of Solomon* behind, the half-burned candle flaring in the draught of the open door and window, the reflection of the lantern on the ceiling and the shadow of the tongs on the floor, the horror-stricken look on the mask of the lady and the satanic grin on that of her paramour, all deserve notice. So do the gross Dutch pictures in the alderman's house, the sordid pewter plates and the sumptuous silver goblet, the stained table-cloth, the egg in rice, and the pig's head which the half-starved and ravenous dog is stealing. There is no defect of invention, no superfluity of detail, no purposeless stroke in this "owre true tale." From first to last it progresses steadily to its catastrophe by a forward

march of skilfully linked and fully developed incidents. It is like a novel of Fielding on canvas; and it seems inconceivable that, with this magnificent work *en évidence*, the critics of that age should have been contented to re-echo the opinion of Walpole that "as a painter Hogarth had but slender merit," and to cackle the foot-rule criticisms of the Rev. William Gilpin as to his ignorance of composition. But so it was. Not until that exhibition of his works at the British Institution in 1814, was it thoroughly understood how excellent and individual both as a designer and a colourist was this native artist, whom "Picture-dealers, Picture-cleaners, Picture-frame-makers, and other Connoisseurs" — to use his own graphically ironical words — had been allowed to rank below the third-rate copyists of third-rate foreigners.

Beyond the remark that the "jaded morning countenance" of the Viscount in Scene II. "lectures on the vanity of pleasure as audibly as anything in Ecclesiastics," Lamb's incomparable essay in *The Reflector* makes no material reference to *Marriage A-la-Mode*. His comments, besides, are confined to the engravings. But Hazlitt, who saw the pictures in the above-mentioned exhibition in 1814, devotes much of his criticism to the tragedy of the Squanderfields, chiefly, it would seem, because Lamb had left the subject untouched. Hazlitt's own studies as an artist, his keen insight and his quick enthusiasm, made him a memorable critic of Hogarth, whose general characteristics he defines with admirable exactitude. Much quotation has made his description of the young Lord and Counsellor Silvertongue sufficiently familiar. But he is equally good

in his vignette of the younger woman in the episode at the Quack Doctor's, a creation which he rightly regards as one of Hogarth's most successful efforts. "Nothing," he says, "can be more striking than the contrast between the extreme softness of her person and the hardened indifference of her character. The vacant stillness, the docility to vice, the premature suppression of youthful sensibility, the doll-like mechanism of the whole figure, which seems to have no other feeling but a sickly sense of pain — show the deepest insight into human nature, and into the effects of those refinements in depravity, by which it has been good-naturedly asserted that 'vice loses half its evil in losing all its grossness.'" In the death of the Countess, again, he speaks thus of two of the subordinate characters: — "We would particularly refer to the captious, petulant self-sufficiency of the apothecary, whose face and figure are constructed on exact physiognomical principles, and to the fine example of passive obedience, and non-resistance in the servant, whom he is taking to task, and whose coat of green and yellow livery is as long and melancholy as his face. The disconsolate look, the haggard eyes, the open mouth, the comb sticking in the hair, the broken gapped teeth, which, as it were, hitch in an answer — everything about him denotes the utmost perplexity and dismay." Some other of Hazlitt's comments are more fanciful, as, for example, when he compares Lady Squanderfield's curl papers (in the "Toilet Scene") to a "wreath of half-blown flowers," and those of the macaroni-amateur to "a *chevaux-de-frise* of horns, which adorn and fortify the lack-lustre expression and mild resignation of the face beneath."

With his condemnation of the attitude of the husband, in the scene at the "Turk's Head Bagnio," as "one in which it would be impossible for him to stand, or even fall," it is difficult to coincide; and it is an illustration of the contradictions of criticism that this very figure should have been selected for especial praise, with particular reference to the charges made against the painter of defective drawing, by another critic who was not only as keenly sympathetic as Hazlitt, but was probably a better anatomist — the author of *Rab and his Friends*.

To Hazlitt's general estimate of Hogarth we shall not now refer. But his comparison of Hogarth and Wilkie may fairly be summarized in this place, because it contains so much excellent discrimination of the former. Wilkie, Hazlitt contends, is a simple realist; Hogarth is a comic painter. While one is a "serious, prosaic, literal narrator of facts," the other is a moral satirist, "exposing vice and folly in their most ludicrous points of view, and, with a profound insight into the weak sides of character and manners in all their tendencies, combinations, and contrasts. . . . He is carried away by a passion for the *ridiculous*. His object is not so much 'to hold the mirror up to nature' as 'to show vice her own feature, scorn her own image.' He is so far from contenting himself with still-life that he is always on the verge of caricature, though without ever falling into it. He does not represent folly or vice in its incipient, or dormant, or *grub* state; but full-grown, with wings, pampered into all sorts of affectation, airy, ostentatious, and extravagant. . . . There is a perpetual collision of eccentricities — a tilt and tournament of

absurdities; the prejudices and caprices of mankind are let loose, and set together by the ears, as in a bear-garden. Hogarth paints nothing but comedy or tragi-comedy. Wilkie paints neither one nor the other. Hogarth never looks at any object but to find out a moral or a ludicrous effect. Wilkie never looks at any object but to see that it is there. . . . In looking at Hogarth, you are ready to burst your sides with laughing at the unaccountable jumble of odd things which are brought together; you look at Wilkie's pictures with a mingled feeling of curiosity and admiration at the accuracy of the representation." The distinction thus drawn is, in the main, a just one. Yet, at certain points, Wilkie comes nearer to Hogarth than any other English artist; and that elegant amateur, Sir George Howland Beaumont, reasoned rightly when he judged the painter of *The Village Politicians* to be, in his day, the only fit recipient of Hogarth's mahl-stick.

To return to *Marriage A-la-Mode*. Notwithstanding that the pictures were, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, announced for sale in 1745, it was five years before they actually found a purchaser, although, in the interval, they seem to have been freely exhibited both at the "Golden Head" and at Cock's Auction Rooms. In 1750, however, they were at last disposed of by another of those unfortunate schemes devised by Hogarth for disposing of his works. The bidding, said the announcement in the *Daily Advertiser*, was to be by written notes; no dealers in pictures were to be admitted as bidders; and the highest bidder at noon on the 6th June was to be the purchaser.

Whether this mode of sale, coupled with the characteristic manner of its notification, "disobliged the Town" or not, it is impossible to say; but it is certain that when Mr. Lane, "of Hillingdon, near Uxbridge," who was to become the lucky proprietor of the pictures, arrived on the date appointed at the "Golden Head," he found he was the only bidder who had put in an appearance.[1] In fact, there was no one in the room but the painter himself and his friend Dr. Parsons, Secretary to the Royal Society. The highest written offer having been declared to be £120, Mr. Lane, shortly before twelve, said he would "make the pounds guineas," but subsequently much to his credit, offered the artist a delay of some hours to find a better purchaser. An hour passed, and as, up to that time, no one had appeared, Hogarth, much mortified, surrendered the pictures to Mr. Lane, who thus became the owner of the artist's best work, and the finest pictorial satire of the century, for the modest sum of £126, which included Carlo Marratti frames that had cost Hogarth four guineas a-piece. Mr. Lane, who readily promised not to sell or clean the pictures without the knowledge of the painter, left them at

[1] Not the "sole bidder," as Allan Cunningham and others have inferred. If this were so, in "making the pounds guineas," Mr. Lane would be bidding against himself, a thing which occasionally occurs at auctions, but is not recommended. We have failed to find any other account of this transaction than that supplied to Nichols for his second edition of 1782, pp. 225–7, by Mr. Lane himself, which is summarized above. Cunningham seems to have derived his information from the same source; but he strangely transforms it. We can but surmise that he followed Ireland's transcript, in which the highest bid is given as £110, instead of £120 — a rather unfortunate mistake, for it appears to have misled a good many people.

his death to his nephew, Colonel J. F. Cawthorne, by whom they were put up to auction in March, 1792, but were bought in again for 910 guineas. In 1797 they were sold at Christie's for £1,381 to Mr. John Julius Angerstein, with the rest of whose collection they were acquired in 1824 for the National Gallery.

*William Hogarth* (New York and London, 1891).

## THE MADONNA OF THE ROCKS

### (*LEONARDO DA VINCI*)

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

THE engraving has popularized the *Vierge aux Rochers*,[1] that composition that exhales the strange and mysterious grace of the master. In a strange spot, a kind of grotto bristling with stalactites and sharply pointed rocks, the holy Virgin presents the little Saint John to the Infant Jesus, who blesses him with uplifted finger. An angel with a proud and charming face, — a celestial hermaphrodite having something of the young maiden and the youth but superior to either in his ideal beauty, — accompanies and supports the little Jesus like a page of the great household who watches over the child of the king with mingled respect and protection. Hair of a thousand crisp curls frames that face so aristocratic and distinguished. Cer-

1 The National Gallery and the Louvre each claims that it possesses the original of this celebrated picture and that its rival is a replica. The former was purchased in Milan, in 1796 by Gavin Hamilton, who sold it to Lord Suffolk, in whose collection at Charlton Park it was long an ornament. It was purchased from him in 1880 for £9,000. The Louvre picture is first mentioned as belonging to Francis I. Designs for it are in Turin and Windsor, and in these the outstretched hand of the angel appears. This does not occur in the London *Madonna of the Rocks*, which differs in several details; for example, there are halos above the heads of the figures and John the Baptist carries a cross. — E. S.



THE MADONNA OF THE ROCKS.
*L. da Vinci.*

tainly this angel occupies a very high rank in the hierarchy of the sky; he should, at least, possess a throne, a dominion, or a principality. The Infant Jesus draws himself up in a pose that shows great knowledge of foreshortening, and is a marvel of roundness and fine modelling. The Virgin is of that charming Lombard type in which under chaste innocence appears that malicious playfulness which da Vinci excels in rendering. The colour of this majestic picture has blackened, particularly in the shadows, but it has lost nothing of its harmony, and perhaps it is more ideally poetic than if it had kept its original freshness and the natural tones of life. Doubts have been raised regarding this picture. Some critics have wished to see here merely a composition by Leonardo executed by a strange hand, or even simply the copy of another canvas painted for the chapel of the Conception of the church of the Franciscans in Milan. But none other than Leonardo could have drawn such firm and pure contours or carried this model through those learned grades that give to the body the roundness of sculpture with all the softness of skin, or rendered his favourite types so superbly and delicately. . . .

*The Madonna of the Rocks*, the engraving of which is so well known, belongs to and may be considered the type of Leonardo's second manner. The modelling is pursued with a care not found in those painters who are not familiar with the engraving chisel. The roundness of the bodies obtained by gradation of tints, the exactness of the shadows and the parsimonious reserve in the light in this unparalleled picture betray the habits of a sculptor. We know that Leonardo was one, and he often said: "It is only in

modelling that the painter can find the science of shadow." For a long time earthen figures which he made use of in his work were preserved.

The appearance of the *Madonna of the Rocks* is singular, mysterious, and charming. A kind of basaltic grotto shelters the divine group placed on the bank of a spring which shows the stones of its bed through its limpid waters. Through the arched grotto we see a rocky landscape dotted with slender trees and traversed by a stream, on the banks of which is a village; the colour of all this is as indefinable as those chimerical countries that we pass through in dreams and is marvellously appropriate to set off the figures.

What an adorable type is the Madonna! It is quite peculiar to Leonardo, and does not in the least recall the virgins of Perugino nor those of Raphael: the upper part of the head is spherical, the forehead well developed; the oval of the cheeks sweeps down to a delicately curved chin; the eyes with lowered lids are circled with shadow; the nose, although fine, is not in a straight line with the forehead, like those of the Greek statues; the nostrils seem to quiver as if palpitating with respiration. The mouth, rather large, has that vague, enigmatical and delicious smile which da Vinci gives to all the faces of his women; faint malice mingles there with the expression of purity and kindness. The hair, long, fine, and silky, falls in waving locks upon cheeks bathed in shadows and half-tints, framing them with incomparable grace.

It is Lombard beauty idealized with an admirable execution whose only fault is perhaps too absolute a perfection.

And what hands! especially the one stretched out with the fingers foreshortened. M. Ingres alone has succeeded in repeating this *tour de force* in his figure of *La Musique couronnant Cherubini*. The arrangement of the draperies is of that exquisite and precious taste that characterizes da Vinci. An agrafe in the form of a medallion fastens on the breast the ends of a mantle lifted up by the arms which thus produce folds full of nobility and elegance.

The angel who is pointing out the Infant Jesus to the little Saint John has the sweetest, the finest, and the proudest head that brush ever fixed upon canvas. He belongs, if we may so express it, to the highest celestial aristocracy One might say he was a page of high birth accustomed to place his foot on the steps of a throne.

Hair in waves and ringlets abounds upon his head, so pure and delicate in design that it surpasses feminine beauty and gives the idea of a type superior to all that man can dream of; his eyes are not turned towards the group that he is pointing at, for he has no need to look in order to see, and even if he did not have wings on his shoulders, we should not be deceived regarding his nature. A divine indifference is depicted upon his charming face, and almost a smile lurks in the corners of his lips. He accomplishes the commission given him by the Eternal with an impassible serenity.

Assuredly no virgin, no woman, ever had a more beautiful face; but the most manly spirit and the most dominating intelligence shine in those dark eyes, fixed vaguely upon the spectator who seeks to penetrate their mystery.

We know how difficult it is to paint children. The

scarcely settled forms of the earliest age lend themselves awkwardly to art expression. In the little Saint John of the *Madonna of the Rocks*, Leonardo da Vinci has solved this problem with his accustomed superiority. The drawn-up position of the child, who presents several portions of his body foreshortened, is full of grace, a grace sought-for and rare, like everything else that the sublime artist ever did, but natural, nevertheless. It is impossible to find anything more finely modelled than this head with its chubby dimpled cheeks, than those plump little round arms, than the body crossed with rolls of fat, and those legs half folded in the sod. The shadow advances towards the light by gradations of infinite delicacy and gives an extraordinary relief to the figure.

Half enveloped in transparent gauze, the divine *Bambino* kneels, joining his hands as if he were already conscious of his mission and understood the gesture which the little Saint John repeats after the angel.

With regard to the colour, if in becoming smoked it has lost its proper value, it has retained a harmony preferred by delicate minds for the freshness and brilliancy of its shadows. The tones have deadened in such perfect sympathy that the result is a kind of neutral, abstract, ideal, and mysterious tint which clothes the forms like a celestial veil and sets them apart from terrestrial realities.

*Guide de l'Amateur au Musée du Louvre* (Paris, 1882).

## BEATRICE CENCI

### (*GUIDO RENI*)

### PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

ON my arrival at Rome I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest: and that the feelings of the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs, and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice, which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*. . . .

The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is most admirable as a work of art: it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features; she seems sad and stricken-down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of

white drapery, from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate; the eyebrows are distinct and arched; the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed, and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping, and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another: her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent; and, though in part modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews; and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine, half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the chapel to St. Thomas) supported by granite columns, and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the ancient Italian fashion, with bal-



Portrait of Beatrice Cenci.
*Guido Reni.*

cony over balcony of open work. One of the gateways of the palace, formed of immense stones, and leading through a passage dark and lofty, and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly. . . .

The most wicked life which the Roman nobleman, Francesco Cenci, led in this world not only occasioned his own ruin and death, but also that of many others and brought down the destruction of his house. Concerning his religion, it is sufficient to state that he never frequented any church; and, although he caused a small chapel, dedicated to the Apostle St. Thomas, to be built in the court of his palace, his intention in so doing was to bury there all his children, whom he cruelly hated. He cursed [his sons] and often also struck and ill-treated his daughters. The eldest of these, being unable any longer to support the cruelty of her father, exposed her miserable condition to the Pope and supplicated him either to marry her according to his choice, or shut her up in a monastery, that by any means she might be liberated from the cruel oppression of her parent. Her prayer was heard, and the Pope, in pity to her unhappiness, bestowed her in marriage to Signore Carlo Gabrielli, one of the first gentlemen of the city of Gubbio, and obliged Francesco to give her a fitting dowry of some thousand crowns.

Francesco, fearing that his youngest daughter would, when she grew up, follow the example of her sister, bethought himself how to hinder this design, and for that purpose shut her up alone in an apartment of the palace, where he himself brought her food, so that no one might approach her; and imprisoned her in this manner

for several months, often inflicting on her blows with a stick.

In the meantime ensued the death of his two sons, Rocco and Cristoforo — one being assassinated by a surgeon, and the other by Paolo Corso, while he was attending mass. The inhuman father showed every sign of joy on hearing this news; saying that nothing would exceed his pleasure if all his children died, and that, when the grave should receive the last, he would, as a demonstration of joy, make a bonfire of all that he possessed. And on the present occasion, as a further sign of his hatred, he refused to pay the slightest sum towards the funeral expenses of his murdered sons. . . .

Beatrice, finding it impossible to continue to live in so miserable a manner, followed the example of her sister; she sent a well-written supplication to the Pope, imploring him to exercise his authority in withdrawing her from the violence and cruelty of her father. But this petition, which might, if listened to, have saved the unfortunate girl from an early death, produced not the least effect.

Francesco, having discovered this attempt on the part of his daughter, became more enraged, and redoubled his tyranny; confining with vigour not only Beatrice, but also his wife. At length, these unhappy women, finding themselves without hope of relief, driven to desperation, resolved to plan his death. . . . Beatrice communicated the design to her eldest brother, Giacomo, without whose concurrence it was impossible that they should succeed. This latter was easily drawn into consent, since he was utterly disgusted with his father, who ill-treated him, and refused to

allow him a sufficient support for his wife and children. . . . Giacomo, with the understanding of his sister and mother-in-law, held various consultations and finally resolved to commit the murder of Francesco to two of his vassals, who had become his inveterate enemies; one called Marzio, and the other Olimpio: the latter, by means of Francesco, had been deprived of his post as castellan of the Rock of Petrella. . . . He [Francesco] received an honourable burial; and his family returned to Rome to enjoy the fruits of their crime. They passed some time there in tranquillity. But Divine Justice, which would not allow so atrocious a wickedness to remain hid and unpunished, so ordered it that the Court of Naples, to which the account of the death of Cenci was forwarded, began to entertain doubts concerning the mode by which he came by it, and sent a commissary to examine the body and to take informations. . . .

The Pope, after having seen all the examinations and the entire confessions, ordered that the delinquents should be drawn through the streets at the tails of horses and afterward decapitated.

Many cardinals and priests interested themselves, and entreated that at least they might be allowed to draw up their defence. The Pope at first refused to comply, replying with severity, and asking these intercessors what defence had been allowed to Francesco when he had been so barbarously murdered in his sleep. . . .

The sentence was executed the morning of Saturday the 11th of May. The messengers charged with the communication of the sentence, and the Brothers of the Con-

sorteria, were sent to the several prisons at five the preceding night; and at six the sentence of death was communicated to the unhappy brothers while they were placidly sleeping. Beatrice, on hearing it broke into a piercing lamentation, and into passionate gesture, exclaiming, "How is it possible, O my God, that I must so suddenly die?" Lucretia, as prepared and already resigned to her fate, listened without terror to the reading of this terrible sentence, and with gentle exhortations induced her daughter-in-law to enter the chapel with her; and the latter, whatever excess she might have indulged in on the first intimation of a speedy death, so much the more now courageously supported herself, and gave every one certain proofs of a humble resignation. Having requested that a notary might be allowed to come to her, and her request being granted, she made her will, in which she left 15,000 crowns to the Fraternity of the Sacre Stimmate, and willed that all her dowry should be employed in portioning for marriage fifty maidens; and Lucretia, imitating the example of her daughter-in-law, ordered that she should be buried in the church of S. Gregorio at Monte Celio, with 32,000 crowns for charitable uses, and made other legacies; after which they passed some time in the Consorteria, reciting psalms and litanies and other prayers with so much fervour that it well appeared that they were assisted by the peculiar grace of God. At eight o'clock they confessed, heard mass, and received the holy communion. Beatrice, considering that it was not decorous to appear before the judges and on the scaffold with their splendid dresses, ordered two dresses, one for herself and the other for her mother-in-law, made in the

manner of the nuns — gathered up, and with long sleeves of black cotton for Lucretia, and of common silk for herself, with a large cord girdle. When these dresses came, Beatrice rose, and, turning to Lucretia — "Mother," said she, "the hour of our departure is drawing near; let us dress therefore in these clothes, and let us mutually aid one another in this last office." Lucretia readily complied with this invitation, and they dressed, each helping the other, showing the same indifference and pleasure as if they were dressing for a feast. . . .

The funereal procession passed through the Via dell' Orso, by the Apollinara, thence through the Piazza Navona; from the church of S. Pantalio to the Piazza Pollarolla, through the Campo di Fiori, S. Carlo a Catinari, to the Arco de' Conti Cenci; proceeding, it stopped under the Palace Cenci, and then finally rested at the Corte Savilla, to take the two ladies. When these arrived, Lucretia remained last, dressed in black, as has been described, with a veil of the same colour, which covered her as far as her girdle. Beatrice was beside her, also covered with a veil. They wore velvet slippers, with silk roses and gold fastenings; and, instead of manacles, their wrists were bound by a silk cord, which was fastened to their girdles in such a manner as to give them almost the free use of their hands. Each had in her left hand the holy sign of benediction, and in the right hand a handkerchief, with which Lucretia wiped her tears, and Beatrice the perspiration from her forehead. Being arrived at the place of punishment, Bernardo was left on the scaffold, and the others were conducted to the chapel. During this dreadful separation,

this unfortunate youth, reflecting that he was soon going to behold the decapitation of his nearest relatives, fell down in a dreadful swoon, from which, however, he was at last recovered, and seated opposite the block. . . .

While the scaffold was being arranged for Beatrice, and whilst the Brotherhood returned to the chapel for her, the balcony of a shop filled with spectators fell, and five of those underneath were wounded, so that two died a few days after. Beatrice, hearing the noise, asked the executioner if her mother had died well, and, being replied that she had, she knelt before the crucifix, and spoke thus: "Be thou everlastingly thanked, O my most gracious Saviour, since, by the good death of my mother, thou hast given me assurance of thy mercy towards me." Then, rising, she courageously and devoutly walked towards the scaffold, repeating by the way several prayers with so much fervour of spirit that all who heard her shed tears of compassion. Ascending the scaffold, while she arranged herself, she also turned her eyes to Heaven, and thus prayed: "Most beloved Jesus, who, relinquishing thy divinity, becamest a man, and didst through love purge my sinful soul also of its original sin with thy precious blood; deign, I beseech thee, to accept that which I am about to shed, at thy most merciful tribunal, as a penalty which may cancel my many crimes, and spare me a part of that punishment justly due to me." Then she placed her head under the axe, which, at one blow, was divided from her body as she was repeating the second verse of the psalm *De profundis*, at the words *fiant aures tuæ*. The blow gave a violent motion to her body, and discomposed her dress.

The executioner raised the head to the view of the people; and in placing it in the coffin placed underneath, the cord by which it was suspended slipped from its hold, and the head fell to the ground, shedding a great deal of blood, which was wiped up with water and sponges. . . . The bodies of Lucretia and Beatrice were left at the end of the bridge until the evening, illuminated by two torches, and surrounded by so great a concourse of people that it was impossible to cross the bridge. An hour after dark, the body of Beatrice was placed in a coffin, covered by a black velvet pall richly adorned with gold: garlands of flowers were placed, one at her head, and another at her feet; and the body was strewed with flowers. It was accompanied to the church of S. Peter in Montorio by the Brotherhood of the Order of Mercy, and followed by many Franciscan monks, with great pomp and innumerable torches. She was there buried before the high altar, after the customary ceremony had been performed. By reason of the distance of the church from the bridge, it was four hours after dark before the ceremony was finished. Afterwards, the body of Lucretia, accompanied in the same manner, was carried to the church of S. Gregorio upon the Celian hill; where, after the ceremony, it was honourably buried.

Beatrice was rather tall, of a fair complexion, and she had a dimple on each cheek, which, especially when she smiled, added a grace to her lovely countenance that transported every one who beheld her. Her hair appeared like threads of gold; and, because they were extremely long, she used to tie it up, and when afterwards she loosened

it, the splendid ringlets dazzled the eyes of the spectator. Her eyes were of a deep blue, pleasing, and full of fire. To all these beauties she added, both in words and action, a spirit and a majestic vivacity that captivated every one. She was twenty years of age when she died.

*The Cenci: Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, edited by William M. Rossetti (London 1878).

## THE TRANSFIGURATION

(*RAPHAEL*)

MRS. JAMESON

THE Transfiguration is an early subject in Christian Art, and has gone through different phases. It is given in the mosaics of S. Apollinare in Classe, at Ravenna (Sixth Century), in that reticence of form and emblematical character significant of classic Art. By the uninitiated the subject would not be readily deciphered. In the centre of the domed apse is a large jewelled cross, in the middle of which is the head of Christ. This represents the Lord. On each side are bust-lengths of Moses and Elijah, while below are three sheep, emblems of the three disciples.

Another form is seen in early miniatures — for instance, in a magnificent Evangelium preserved in the Cathedral at Aix-la-Chapelle. Here Christ is seen with three rays above Him; at His side are the full-length figures of Moses and Elijah; below are the three disciples — two crouching low in terror, while Peter raises himself, saying "Lord, it is good for us to be here," etc.

The next form is that given by early Byzantine artists, of a very formal and conventional character. Christ is in the mandorla, from which five rays of glory proceed. These five rays touch the prophets at His side, and the

disciples, all three crouching low at His feet. We see Giotto scarcely emerging from this convention in his series in the Accademia.

Fra Angelico has a more fanciful representation. The Christ has his arms extended, as a type of the death He was to suffer on the Cross. The disciples retain the traditional Byzantine positions. At the sides are the mere heads of the prophets, while the painter's adoration of the Virgin, and his homage toward St. Domenic, the founder of his order, are shown by their attendant figures.

It must be allowed that there could be no more daring or more difficult undertaking in Art than to represent by any human medium this transcendent manifestation of the superhuman character of the Redeemer. It has been attempted but seldom, and of course, however reverent and poetical the spirit in which the attempt has been made, it has proved, in regard to the height of the theme, only a miserable failure. I should observe, however, that the early artists hardly seem to have aimed at anything beyond a mere *indication* of an incident too important to be wholly omitted. In all these examples the representation of a visible fact has been predominant, the aim in the mind of the artist being to comply with some established conventional or theological rule.

Only in one instance has the vision of heavenly beatitude been used to convey the sublimest lesson to humanity, and thus the inevitable failure has been redeemed nobly, or, we might rather say, converted into a glorious success.

When Raphael, in the last year of his life, was commissioned by the Cardinal de' Medici to paint an altar-



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THE TRANSFIGURATION.

*Raphael.*

piece for the Cathedral of Narbonne, he selected for his subject the Transfiguration of our Lord.

Every one knows that this picture has a world-wide fame; it has, indeed, been styled the "greatest picture in the world;" it has also been criticised as if Raphael, the greatest artist who ever lived, had been here unmindful of the rules of Art. But it is clear that of those who have enthusiastically praised or daringly censured, few have interpreted its real significance. Some have erred in ignorantly applying the rules of Art where they were in no respect applicable. Others, not claiming to know anything, or care anything about rules of Art, insisting on their right to judge what is or is not intelligible to *them*, have given what I must needs call very absurd opinions about what they do not understand. It has been objected by one set of critics that there is a want of unity, that the picture is divided in two, and that these two parts not only do not harmonize, but "mutually hurt each other." Others say that the spiritual beatitude above, and the contortions of the afflicted boy below, present a shocking contrast. Others sneer at the little hillock or platform which they suppose is to stand for Mount Tabor, think the group above profane, and the group below horrible. Such as these, with a courage quite superior to all artistic criticism, and undazzled by the accumulated fame of five centuries, venture on a fiat which reminds one of nothing so much as Voltaire's ridicule of Hamlet, and his denunciation of that *barbare*, that *imbécile de Shakespeare*, who would not write so as to be appreciated by a French critic.

Now, in looking at the Transfiguration (and I hope the

reader, if the original be far off, will at least have a good print before him while going over these following remarks), we must bear in mind that it is not an historical but a devotional picture — that the intention of the painter was not to represent a scene, but to excite religious feelings by expressing, so far as painting might do it, a very sublime idea, which it belongs to us to interpret.

I can best accomplish this, perhaps, by putting down naturally my own impressions, when I last had the opportunity of studying this divine picture.

If we remove to a certain distance from it, so that the forms shall become vague, indistinct, and only the masses of colour and the light and shade perfectly distinguishable, we shall see that the picture is indeed divided as if horizontally, the upper half being all light, and the lower half comparatively all dark. As we approach nearer, step by step, we behold above, the radiant figure of the Saviour floating in mid air, with arms outspread, garments of transparent light, glorified visage upturned as in rapture, and the hair uplifted and scattered as I have seen it in persons under the influence of electricity. On the right, Moses; on the left, Elijah; representing, respectively, the old law and the old prophecies, which both testified of Him. The three disciples lie on the ground, terror-struck, dazzled. There is a sort of eminence or platform, but no perspective, no attempt at real locality, for the scene is revealed as in a vision, and the same soft transparent light envelops the whole. This is the spiritual life, raised far above the earth, but not yet in heaven. Below is seen the earthly life, poor humanity struggling helplessly with pain, infir-

mity, and death. The father brings his son, the possessed, or, as we should now say, the epileptic boy, who ofttimes falls into the water or into the fire, or lies grovelling on the earth, foaming and gnashing his teeth; the boy struggles in his arms — the rolling eyes, the distorted features, the spasmodic limbs are at once terrible and pitiful to look on.

Such is the profound, the heart-moving significance of this wonderful picture. It is, in truth, a fearful approximation of the most opposite things; the mournful helplessness, suffering, and degradation of human nature, the unavailing pity, are placed in immediate contrast with spiritual light, life, hope — nay, the very fruition of heavenly rapture.

It has been asked, who are the two figures, the two saintly deacons, who stand on each side of the upper group, and what have they to do with the mystery above, or the sorrow below? Their presence shows that the whole was conceived as a vision, or a poem. The two saints are St. Lawrence and St. Julian, placed there at the request of the Cardinal de' Medici, for whom the picture was painted, to be offered by him as an act of devotion as well as munificence to his new bishopric; and these two figures commemorate in a poetical way, not unusual at the time, his father, Lorenzo, and his uncle, Giuliano de' Medici. They would be better away; but Raphael, in consenting to the wish of his patron that they should be introduced, left no doubt of the significance of the whole composition — that it is placed before worshippers as a revelation of the double life of earthly suffering and spiritual faith, as an excitement to religious contemplation and religious hope.

In the Gospel, the Transfiguration of our Lord is first described, then the gathering of the people and the appeal of the father in behalf of his afflicted son. They appear to have been simultaneous; but painting only could have placed them before our eyes, at the same moment, in all their suggestive contrast. It will be said that in the brief record of the Evangelist, this contrast is nowhere indicated, but the painter found it there and was right to use it—just the same as if a man should choose a text from which to preach a sermon, and, in doing so, should evolve from the inspired words many teachings, many deep reasonings, besides the one most obvious and apparent.

But, after we have prepared ourselves to understand and to take into our heads all that this wonderful picture can suggest, considered as an emanation of the mind, we find that it has other interests for us, considered merely as a work of Art. It was the last picture which came from Raphael's hand; he was painting on it when seized with his last illness. He had completed all the upper part of the composition, all the ethereal vision, but the lower part of it was still unfinished, and in this state the picture was hung over his bier, when, after his death, he was laid out in his painting-room, and all his pupils and his friends, and the people of Rome, came to look upon him for the last time; and when those who stood round raised their eyes to the *Transfiguration*, and then bent them on the lifeless form extended beneath it, "every heart was like to burst with grief" (*faceva scoppiare l' anima di dolore a ognuno che quivi guardava*), as, indeed, well it might.

Two-thirds of the price of the picture, 655 *duccati*

*di camera*, had already been paid by the Cardinal de' Medici; and, in the following year, that part of the picture which Raphael had left unfinished was completed by his pupil Giulio Romano, a powerful and gifted but not a refined or elevated genius. He supplied what was wanting in the colour and chiaroscuro according to Raphael's design, but not certainly as Raphael would himself have done it. The sum which Giulio received he bestowed as a dowry on his sister, when he gave her in marriage to Lorenzetto the sculptor, who had also been a pupil and friend of Raphael. The Cardinal did not send the picture to Narbonne, but, unwilling to deprive Rome of such a masterpiece, he presented it to the Church of San Pietro in Montorio, and sent in its stead the *Raising of Lazarus*, by Sebastian del Piombo, now in our National Gallery. The French carried off the *Transfiguration* to Paris in 1797, and, when restored, it was placed in the Vatican, where it now is. The *Communion of St. Jerome*, by Domenichino, is opposite to it, and it is a sort of fashion to compare them, and with some to give the preference to the admirable picture by Domenichino; but the two are so different in aim and conception, the merits of each are so different in kind, that I do not see how any comparison can exist between them.

*The History of Our Lord, as exemplified in Works of Art*, continued and completed by Lady Eastlake (2nd ed., London, 1865).

## THE BULL

### (*PAUL POTTER*)

EUGÈNE FROMENTIN

*THE Lesson in Anatomy*, *The Night Watch*, and Paul Potter's *Bull* are the most celebrated things in Holland. To the latter the Museum at The Hague owes a great part of the interest it inspires. It is not the largest of Paul Potter's canvases; but it is, at least, the only one of his great pictures that merits serious attention. *The Bear Hunt* in the Museum of Amsterdam (supposing it to be authentic), even by ridding it of the retouches which disfigure it, has never been anything else save the extravagance of a young man, the greatest mistake he committed. *The Bull* is not priced. Estimating it according to the present value of Paul Potter's other works, nobody doubts that in a European auction it would fetch a fabulous sum. Then is it a beautiful picture? By no means. Does it deserve the importance attached to it? Incontestably. Then is Paul Potter a very great painter? Very great. Does it follow that he really does paint as well as is commonly supposed? Not exactly. That is a misapprehension that it will be well to dissipate.

On the day when this suppositious auction of which I speak opened, and consequently when every one had the right freely to discuss the merits of this famous work, if



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THE BULL.

*Paul Potter.*

anyone dared to let the truth be heard, he would speak very nearly as follows :

"The reputation of the picture is very much exaggerated and at the same time very legitimate; it is contradictory. It is considered as an incomparable specimen of painting, and that is a mistake. People think it is an example to be followed, a model to be copied, one in which ignorant generations may learn the technical secrets of their art. In that again they deceive themselves entirely. The work is ugly and very ill-conceived, and the painting is monotonous, thick, heavy, dull, and dry. The arrangement is of the poorest. Unity is lacking in this picture, which begins one knows not where, does not end anywhere, receives light without being illuminated, and distributes it at random, escapes on every side and runs out of the frame, so exactly like flowered linen prints does it seem to be painted. The space is too crowded without being occupied. Neither the lines, nor the colour, nor the distribution of the effects, give it even those first conditions of existence which are essential to any fairly well-ordered work. The animals are ridiculous in their size. The painting of the fawn cow with the white head is very hard. The ewe and the ram are modelled in plaster. As for the shepherd, no one would think of defending him. Only two portions of this picture seem to be intended for our notice, the great sky and the enormous bull. The cloud is well in place: it is lighted up where it should be, and it is also properly tinted according to the demands of the principal object, its purpose being to accompany or serve as a relief to the latter. With a wise understanding

of the law of contrasts, the painter has beautifully graded the strong tints and the dark shading of the animal. The darkest part is opposed to the light portion of the sky, and the most energetic and ingrained characteristic of the bull is opposite to all that is most limpid in the atmosphere. But this is hardly a merit, considering the simplicity of the problem. The rest is simply a surplus that we might cut away without regret, to the great advantage of the picture."

That would be a brutal criticism, but an exact one. And yet public opinion, less punctilious or more clear-sighted, would say that the signature was well worth the price.

Public opinion never goes entirely astray. By uncertain roads, often by those not most happily chosen, it arrives definitely at the expression of a true sentiment. The motives that lead it to acclaim any one are not always of the best, but there are always other good reasons that justify this expression. It is deceived regarding titles, sometimes it mistakes faults for excellencies, it estimates a man for his manner, and that is the least of all his merits; it believes that a painter paints well when he paints badly and because he paints minutely. What is astonishing in Paul Potter is the imitation of objects carried to the point of eccentricity. People do not know, or do not notice, that in such a case the soul of the painter is of more worth than the work, and that his manner of feeling is of infinitely greater importance than the result.

When he painted *The Bull* in 1647, Paul Potter was not twenty-three years of age. He was a very young man; and according to the usual run of young men of

twenty-three years, he was a child. To what school did he belong? To none. Had he any masters? We do not know of any other teachers than his father Pieter Simonsz Potter, an obscure painter, and Jacob de Wet (of Haarlem), who had no force to influence a pupil either for good or evil. Paul Potter then found around his cradle and afterwards in the studio of his second master nothing but simple advice and no doctrines; very strange to say, the pupil did not need anything more. Until 1647 Paul Potter divided his time between Amsterdam and Haarlem, that is to say, between Frans Hals and Rembrandt in the focus of the most active, the most inspiring and the richest art of celebrated masters that the world had ever known except during the preceding century in Italy. Professors were not lacking, the choice was only too embarrassing. Wynants was forty-six; Cuyp, forty-two; Terburg, thirty-nine; Ostade, thirty-seven; Metzu, thirty-two; Wouwerman, twenty-seven; and Berghem, about his own age, was twenty-three years of age. Many of the youngest even were members of the Guild of St. Luke. Finally, the greatest of all, the most illustrious, Rembrandt, had already produced the *Night Watch*, and he was a master to tempt one.

What became of Paul Potter? How did he isolate himself in the heart of this rich and swarming school, where practical ability was extreme, talent universal, style somewhat similar, and, nevertheless — a beautiful thing at that happy time — the methods of feeling were very individual? Had he any fellow-pupils? We do not see them. His friends are unknown. He was born, — it is the

utmost we can do to be sure of the exact year. He reveals himself early, signing a charming etching at fourteen; at twenty-two he is ignorant on many points, but on others his maturity is unexampled. He laboured and produced work upon work; doing some things admirably. He accumulated them in a few years in haste and abundance, as if death were at his heels, and yet with an appreciation and a patience which render this prodigious labour miraculous. He married, young, for any one else but very late for him, for it was on July 3, 1650; and on August 4, 1654, four years afterwards, death seized him in the height of his glory, but before he had learned his whole ground. What could be simpler, shorter, and more fully accomplished? Genius and no lessons, ardent study, an ingenuous and able product, attentive observation and reflection; add to this great natural charm, the gentleness of a meditative mind, the appreciation of a conscience filled with scruples, the sadness inseparable from solitary labour, and, perhaps, the natural melancholy belonging to sickly beings, and you very nearly have all Paul Potter.

To this extent, if we except its charm, *The Bull* at The Hague represents him wonderfully well. It is a great *study*, too great from the common-sense point of view, not too great for the research of which it was the object, nor for the instruction that the painter drew from it.

Reflect that Paul Potter, compared with his brilliant contemporaries, was ignorant of all the skill of the handicraft: I do not speak of the tricks of which his frankness can never be suspected. He especially studied forms and aspects in their absolute simplicity. The least artifice was

an embarrassment which would have spoiled him, because it would have altered his clear view of things. A great bull in a vast plain, an immense sky, and no horizon, so to speak, — what better opportunity is there for a student to learn once for all a host of very difficult things, and to know them, as they say, by rule and compass. The action is very simple; he did not fail with it; the movement is true, and the head admirably full of life. The beast has his age, his type, his character, his disposition, his length, his height, his joints, his bones, his muscles, his hair rough or smooth, in flocks or curls, his hide loose or stretched, — all is perfection. The head, the eye, the neck and shoulders, the chest, from the point of view of a naïve and powerful observation, form a very rare specimen, perhaps, really without an equal. I do not say that the pigment is beautiful, nor that the colour is well chosen; pigment and colour are here subordinated too visibly to preoccupations of form for us to exact much on that head, when the designer has given all, or nearly all, under another. Moreover, the work in that field accomplished with such force results in rendering nature exactly as she is, in her reliefs, her nuances, and her power, and almost in her mysteries. It is not possible to aim at a more circumscribed but more formal result and attain it with more success. People say *Paul Potter's Bull*, and that is not enough, I assure you: they might say *The Bull*, and, in my opinion, that would be the greatest eulogy that could be bestowed upon this work, so mediocre in its weak parts and yet so decisive.

*Les Maîtres d'Autrefois* (Paris, 1876)

## CORÉSUS AND CALLIRHOÉ

### (*FRAGONARD*)

EDMOND AND JULES DE GONCOURT

POETS were lacking in the last century. I do not say rhymers, versifiers and mechanical arrangers of words; I say poets. Poetry, taking the expression in the truth and height of its meaning; poetry, which is an elevation or an enchantment of the imagination, the contribution of an ideal of reverie or gaiety to human thought; poetry, which carries away and suspends above the world the soul of a period and the spirit of a people, was unknown to the France of the Eighteenth Century, and her two only poets were two painters: Watteau and Fragonard.

Watteau, the man of the North, the child of Flanders, the great poet of Love! the master of sweet serenity and tender Paradises, whose work may be likened to the Elysian Field of Passion! Watteau, the melancholy enchanter who has made nature sigh so heavily in his autumn woods, full of regret around dreamful pleasure! Watteau, the Pensieroso of the Regency; Fragonard, the little poet of the *Art of Love* of the time.

Have you noticed in *L'Embarquement de Cythère* all those naked little forms of saucy and knavish Loves half lost in the heights of the sky? Where are they going? They



Corésus and Callirhoé.

*Fragonard.*

are going to play at Fragonard's and to put on his palette the hues of their butterfly wings.

Fragonard is the bold narrator, the gallant *amoroso*, the rogue with Gallic malice, nearly Italian in genius but French in spirit; the man of foreshortened mythology and roguish undress, of skies made rosy by the flesh of god desses and alcoves lighted with female nudity.

Upon a table beside a bunch of roses let us allow the leaves of his work to be ruffled by the wind of a lovely day: from landscapes where robes of satin are escaping in coquettish flight, our glance skips to meadows guarded by Annettes of fifteen years, to granges where the somersaults of love upset the painter's easel, to pastures where the milk-maid of the milk-jug reveals her bare legs and weeps like a nymph over her broken urn, for her sheep, her flocks, and her vanished dream. Upon another page a maiden in love is writing a beloved name on the bark of a tree on a lovely summer evening. The breeze is always turning them over: now a shepherd and shepherdess are embracing before a sun-dial which little Cupids make into a pleasure-dial. It keeps on turning them; and now we have the beautiful dream of a pilgrim sleeping with his staff and gourd beside him, and to whom appears a host of young fays skimming a huge pot. Does it not seem that your eye is upon a vision of a fête by Boucher, shown by his pupil in Tasso's garden? Adorable magic lantern! where Clorinde follows Fiammette, where the gleams of an epic poem mingle with the smiles of the *novellieri!* Tales of the fay Urgèle, little comic jests, rays of gayety and sunshine which one might say were thrown upon the cloth upon

which Béroalde de Verville made his cherry-gatherer walk. Tasso, Cervantes, Boccaccio, Ariosto (Ariosto as he has drawn him, inspired by Love and Folly), it recalls all his genii of happiness. It laughs with the liberties of La Fontaine. It goes from Properce to Grécourt, from Longus to Favart, from Gentil-Bernard to André Chénier. It has, so to speak, the heart of a lover and the hand of a charming rascal. In it the breath of a sigh passes into a kiss and it is young with immortal youth: it is the poem of Desire, a divine poem!

It is enough to have written it like Fragonard for him to remain what he will always be: the Cherubino of erotic painting. . . .

He leaped into success and fame at one bound, with his picture of *Callirhoé*, that painting of universal approbation, which caused him to be received into the *Académie* by acclamation; that painting which aroused public enthusiasm at the Salon in the month of August, and which had the honour of a Royal command for its reproduction upon Gobelin tapestry.

Imagine a large picture nine feet high by twelve feet long, where the human figures are of natural size, the architecture in its proper proportion and the crowd and sky have their own space. Between two columns of a shining marble with its iris-coloured reflections, above the heavy purple of a tapestry with golden fringe spread out and broken by the ridge of two steps, opens the scene of an antique drama which seems to be under the curtain of a theatre. On this tapestry, on this pagan altar-cloth, stands a copper crater near an urn of black marble half veiled with

white linen. A column cuts in half a large candelabra smoking with incense and ornamented with goats' heads, a superb bronze which must have been taken from the lava of Herculaneum. A young priest has thrown himself on his knees against this candelabra and embraces its pedestal; in terror he has allowed his censer to fall to the earth. Standing by his side is Corésus, the high priest, crowned with ivy, enveloped in draperies, and seemingly floating in the sacerdotal whiteness of his vestments; a beardless priest, of doubtful sex, of androgynous grace, an enervated Adonis, the shadow of a man. With a backward turn of one hand he plunges the knife in his breast; with the other he has the appearance of casting his life into the heavens, whilst across his effeminate face pass the weakness of the agony and grief of violent death. Opposite the dying high-priest is the living though fainting victim, nearly dead at the belief that she is about to die. With her head resting on her shoulder, she has glided before the smoking altar. Her body has lost all rigidity on her bending legs, her arms hang down at her side; her glance is distracted; she has lost all volition in the use of her limbs; and she is there, sinking motionless, her throat scarcely distending with a breath, turning white under her crown of roses, which the painter's brush has made to pale in sympathy. Between her body and the altar a young priest is leaning in horrified curiosity. Another, upon one knee, perfectly terrified, with fixed gaze and parted lips, holds before the young girl the basin used to receive the blood of the victims. In the background are visible figures of old grey-bearded priests, aghast at the horrible spectacle. Above them the smoke

of the temple, the flames, the perfumes, and the incense of the altar mingle with the cloudy sky, a sky of a night of miracles and hell, wild and rolling, a sky of fiery and sombre whirlwind, in which a genie brandishing a torch and dagger bears Love away in sombre flight enveloped in a black mantle. From that shadow, let us go to the shadow at the base of the picture: two women, writhing with fear, shrink back veiling their faces; a little boy clings about their knees and holds fast to them, and a ray of sunlight, falling across the arm of one of the women, illumines the hair and the little rosy hands of the child.

Such is Fragonard's great composition, that striking unexpected production, for which he must have taken the idea, and, perhaps, even the effect from one of the revivals of *Callirhoé* by the poet Roy;[1] a painting of the opera, and demanding from the opera its soul and its light. But what a magnificent illusion this picture presents! It must be seen in the Louvre so that the eyes may feast upon the clear and warm splendour of the canvas, the milky radiance of all those white priestly robes, the virginal light inundating the centre of the scene, palpitating and dying away on *Callirhoé*, enveloping her fainting body like the fading of day, and caressing that failing throat. The rays of light and the smoke all melt into one another; the temple smokes and the mists of incense ascend everywhere. Night is rolling above the day. The sun falls into the gloom and casts a reflected glare. The gleams of sulphur flames illuminate the faces and the throng. Fragonard lavishly

[1] *Callirhoé*, by Pierre-Charles Roy, was written in 1712. — E. S.

threw the lights of fairyland upon his masterpiece: it is Rembrandt combined with Ruggieri.

And what movement, what action are in this agitated and convulsive painting! The clouds and the garments whirl, the gestures are rapid, the attitudes are despairing, horror shudders in every pose and on every lip, and a great mute cry seems to rise throughout this entire temple and throughout this entire lyrical composition.

This cry of a picture, so new for the Eighteenth Century, is Passion. Fragonard introduces it into his time in this picture so full of tragic tenderness where we might fancy the entombment of Iphigenia. The phantasmagoria raises his art to the level of the emotion of the *Alceste* of Euripides; it reveals a future for French painting: pathos.

*L'Art du Dix-Huitième Siècle* (3d ed., Paris, 1882).

## THE MARKET-CART

### (*GAINSBOROUGH*)

### RICHARD AND SAMUEL REDGRAVE

IT is said that Sir Joshua at an Academy dinner gave "the health of Mr. Gainsborough, the greatest landscape painter of the day," to which Wilson, in his blunt, grumbling way, retorted, "Ay, and the greatest portrait painter, too." In Gainsborough's own time, the world of Art patrons seem to have employed his talents as a portrait painter, but to have disregarded his landscape art. Beechey said that "in Gainsborough's house in Pall Mall the landscapes stood ranged in long lines from his hall to his painting-room, and that those who came to sit to him for his portraits, on which he was chiefly occupied, rarely deigned to honour them with a look as they passed them." After his death, however, and the eulogium Reynolds had pronounced on his landscapes and rustic children, these came to be considered his finest works, and it is usual now to speak of him as a landscape rather than as a portrait painter. But it is more than doubtful whether Wilson did not judge more truly of his talent than Sir Joshua; and without wishing to place him above Reynolds in that painter's peculiar branch, it is certain that Gainsborough, in his finest portraits, formed a style equally original, and produced works that are every way worthy to take rank with those of the



THE MARKET-CART.
*Gainsborough.*

great President. They contrast with the latter in being more silvery and pure, and in the absence of that impasto and richness in which Reynolds indulged, but his figures are surrounded by air and light, and his portraits generally are easy and graceful without affectation. . . .

Reynolds says: "It is difficult to determine whether Gainsborough's portraits were most admirable for exact truth of resemblance, or his landscapes for a portrait-like representation of Nature," — a strange judgment, written more with a view to a well-rounded period than to any true criticism on his rival's landscape art. It is certainly true that Gainsborough put aside altogether the early foundation of Dutch landscape on which he had begun to build, and took an entirely original view of Nature, both as to treatment and handling. Yet in the sense in which the artists of our day paint "portrait-like representations of Nature," Gainsborough's art was anything but portrait-like. It has been objected to the great Italian landscape painters that they did not discriminate between one tree and another, but indulged in a "painter's tree." There is far more variety in those of our native artist, yet it would puzzle a critic to say what his trees really are, and to point out in his landscapes the distinctive differences between oak and beech, and elm. The weeds, too, in his foregrounds, have neither form nor species. On the margins of his brooks or pools a few sword-shaped dashes tell of reeds and rushes; on the banks of his road-side some broad-leaved forms catch the straggling sun-ray, but he cared little to go into botanical minutiæ, or to enable us to tell their kind. His rocks are certainly not truly stratified or geologically correct

— how should they be? — he studied them, perhaps, in his painting-room from broken stones and bits of coal. The truth is, however, that he gave us more of Nature than any merely imitative rendering could do. As the great portrait painter looks beyond the features of his sitter to give the mind and character of the man, often thereby laying himself open to complaint as to his mere *likeness* painting; so the great landscape painter will at all times sink individual imitation in seeking to fill us with the greater truths of his art. It may be the golden sunset or the breezy noon, the solemn breadth of twilight, or the silvery freshness of morn — the something of colour, of form, of light and shade, floating rapidly away, that makes the meanest and most commonplace view at times startle us with wonder at its beauty, when treated by the true artist.

And did he study such merely from broken stones and pieces of coal, from twigs and weeds in his painting-room? Vain idea! these were but the *memoria technica*, that served to call up in his mind the thoughts he had fed on in many a lonely walk and leisure moment, when they of common clay plodded on and saw nothing — brooded on with a nature tuned to the harmonies of colour and of form, organized in a high degree to receive and retain impressions of beauty; and gifted with the power to place vividly before us by his art objects which had so delighted and pleased himself. Does any one think otherwise — let him try what can be got out of stones and coals; let him try how his memory will aid him, with such feeble helps as broken twigs and dry mosses, and then he may be able to appreciate, in a degree, how this man had won the mastery

of paint and canvas and turned their dross into the fine gold of true Art.

But in the history of British Art, the great merit of Gainsborough is, to have broken us entirely loose from old conventions. Wilson had turned aside from Dutch art to ennoble landscape by selecting from the higher qualities of Italian art; but Gainsborough early discarded all he had learned from the bygone schools, and gave himself up wholly to Nature; he was capable of delicate handling and minute execution, but he resolutely cast them aside lest any idol should interfere between him and his new religion. There may be traced a lingering likeness in his landscapes to those of Rubens; but this arose more from his generalization of details, his sinking the parts in the whole, than to any imitation of the great Fleming. It is like the recollection of some sweet melody which the musician weaves into his theme, all unconscious that it is a memory and not a child of his own creation.

The pictures of Gainsborough, on the whole, stand better far than those by Reynolds. "Landscape with Cattle," a picture belonging to the Marquis of Lansdowne, is lovely for colour and freshness; it has been lined and repaired, but evidently had parted widely in the lights. Could any closeness of individual imitation give the truth, beauty of colour, and luminous sunlight of this picture? It somewhat reminds one of Zuccarelli, but how completely has Gainsborough sucked the honey and left the comb of the master! Viewed near, this picture is somewhat loose in texture, and hesitating in execution; the colour obtained by semi-transparents, as yellow-ochre, terra-verte, and ultra-

marine; while viewed at a proper distance, it is in perfect harmony.

In examining the landscapes of this painter, much must, however, be allowed for the present state of some of his works. Many are covered with a dark-brown varnish, obscuring the silvery freshness of their first state. This has cracked up in the darks and quite changed them. The *Market-Cart* and the *Watering-Place*, as well as others in the National collection, are in a very different condition to that in which they left the easel. The world, however, has become so conservative, and has such belief in the picture-vamper's "golden tones," that so they must remain. It would be most impolitic to touch them until they have become too dark to be seen at all.

*A Century of Painters of the English School* (London, 1866).

## BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

### (*TINTORET*)

### HIPPOLYTE ADOLPHE TAINE

IT is more difficult for me to speak to you of the Venetian painters than of any others. Before their pictures one has no desire to analyze or reason; if one does this, it is by compulsion. The eyes enjoy, and that is all: they enjoy as the Venetians enjoyed in the Sixteenth Century; for Venice was not at all a literary or critical city like Florence; there painting was nothing more than the complement of the environing pleasure, the decoration of a banqueting-hall or of an architectural alcove. In order to understand this you must place yourself at a distance, shut your eyes and wait until your sensations are dulled; then your mind performs its work. . . .

There are certain families of plants, the species of which are so closely allied that they resemble more than they differ from each other: such are the Venetian painters, not only the four celebrities, Giorgione, Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese, but others less illustrious, Palma "il vecchio," Bonifazio, Paris Bordone, Pordenone, and that host enumerated by Ridolfi in his *Lives*, contemporaries, relatives, and successors of the great men, Andrea Vicentino, Palma "il giovine," Zelotti, Bazzaco, Padovinano, Bassano, Schiavone, Moretto, and many others. What first appeals to the eye is the general and common type; the

individual and personal traits remain for a time in shadow. They have worked together and by turns in the Ducal Palace, but by the involuntary concord of their talents their pictures make an harmonious whole.

At first our eyes are astonished; with the exception of three or four halls, the apartments are low and small. The Hall of Council of the Ten and those surrounding it [1] are gilded habitations, insufficient for the figures that dwell therein; but after a moment one forgets the habitation and sees only the figures. Power and voluptuousness blaze there, unbridled and superb. In the angles nude men, painted caryatides, jut out in such high relief that at the first glance one takes them for statues; a colossal breath swells their chests; their thighs and their shoulders writhe. On the ceiling a Mercury, entirely nude, is almost a figure by Rubens, but of a more gross sensuality. A gigantic Neptune urges before him his sea-horses which plash through the waves; his foot presses the edge of his chariot; his enormous and ruddy body is turned backwards; he raises his conch with the joy of a bestial god; the salt wind blows through his scarf, his hair, and his beard; one could never imagine, without seeing it, such a furious *élan*, such an overflowing of animal spirit, such a joy of pagan flesh, such a triumph of free and shameless life in the open air and broad sunlight. What an injustice to limit the Venetians to the painting of merely happy scenes and to the art of simply pleasing the eye! They have also painted grandeur and heroism; the mere energetic and active body

[1] Painted by Veronese and by Zelotti and Bazzaco under his direction.



Bacchus and Ariadne.

*Tintoret.*

has attracted them; like the Flemings, they have their colossi also. Their drawing, even without colour, is capable by itself of expressing all the solidity and all the vitality of the human structure. Look in this same hall at the four *grisailles* by Veronese — five or six women veiled or half-nude, all so strong and of such a frame that their thighs and arms would stifle a warrior in their embrace, and, nevertheless, their physiognomy is so simple or so proud that, despite their smile, they are virgins like Raphael's Venuses and Psyches.

The more we consider the ideal figures of Venetian art, the more we feel the breath of an heroic age behind us. Those great draped old men with the bald foreheads are the patrician kings of the Archipelago, Barbaresque sultans who, trailing their silken simars, receive tribute and order executions. The superb women in sweeping robes, bedizened and creased, are empress-daughters of the Republic, like that Catherina Cornaro from whom Venice received Cyprus. There are the muscles of fighters in the bronzed breasts of the sailors and captains; their bodies, reddened by the sun and wind, have dashed against the athletic bodies of janizaries; their turbans, their pelisses, their furs, their sword-hilts constellated with precious stones, — all the magnificence of Asia is mingled on their bodies with the floating draperies of antiquity and with the nudities of Pagan tradition. Their straight gaze is still tranquil and savage, and the pride and the tragic grandeur of their expression announce the presence of a life in which man was concentrated in a few simple passions, having no other thought than that of being master so that he should not

be a slave, and to kill so that he should not be killed. Such is the spirit of a picture by Veronese which, in the Hall of the Council of the Ten, represents an old warrior and a young woman; it is an allegory, but we do not trouble ourselves about the subject. The man is seated and leans forward, his chin upon his hand, with a savage air; his colossal shoulders, his arm, and his bare leg encircled with a cnemis of lions' heads protrudes from his ample drapery; with his turban, his white beard, his thoughtful brow, and his traits of a wearied lion, he has the appearance of a Pacha who is tired of everything. She, with downcast eyes, places her hands upon her soft breast; her magnificent hair is caught up with pearls; she seems a captive awaiting the will of her master, and her neck and bowed face are strongly empurpled in the shadow that encircles them.

Nearly all the other halls are empty; the paintings have been taken into an interior room. We go to find the curator of the Museum; we tell him in bad Italian that we have no letters of introduction, nor titles, nor any rights whatsoever to be admitted to see them. Thereupon he has the kindness to conduct us into the reserved hall, to lift up the canvases, one after the other, and to lose two hours in showing them to us.

I have never had greater pleasure in Italy; these canvases are now standing before our eyes; we can look at them as near as we please, at our ease, and we are alone. There are some browned giants by Tintoret, with their skin wrinkled by the play of the muscles, Saint Andrew and Saint Mark, real colossi like those of Rubens. There is a Saint Christopher by Titian, a kind of bronzed and

bowed Atlas with his four limbs straining to bear the weight of a world, and on his neck by an extraordinary contrast, the tiny, soft, and laughing *bambino*, whose infantine flesh has the delicacy and grace of a flower. Above all, there are a dozen mythological and allegorical paintings by Tintoret and Veronese, of such brilliancy and such intoxicating fascination that a veil seems to fall from our eyes and we discover an unknown world, a paradise of delights situated beyond all imagination and all dreams. When the Old Man of the Mountain transported into his harem his sleeping youths to render them capable of extreme devotion, doubtless it was such a spectacle that he furnished.

Upon the coast at the margin of the infinite sea, serious Ariadne receives the ring of Bacchus, and Venus, with a crown of gold, has come through the air to celebrate their marriage. Here is the sublime beauty of bare flesh, such as it appears coming out of the water, vivified by the sun and touched with shadows. The goddess is floating in liquid light and her twisted back, her flanks and her curves are palpitating, half enveloped in a white, diaphanous veil. With what words can we paint the beauty of an attitude, a tone, or an outline? Who will describe the healthy and roseate flesh under the amber transparency of gauze? How shall we represent the soft plenitude of a living form and the curves of limbs which flow into the leaning body? Truly she is swimming in the light like a fish in its lake, and the air, filled with vague reflections, embraces and caresses her.

*Voyage en Italie* (Paris, 1866).

## BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

### ANONYMOUS

TITIAN'S magnificent pictures in the Ducal Palace were, all but one, destroyed by fire the year after his death; but his impetuous rival, Tintoretto, is abundantly represented there. With regard to *him*, as usual, our admiration for frequent manifestations of extraordinary power is but too commonly checked and chilled by coarse, heavy painting, and the unexpressive wholly uninteresting character of many of his allegorical or celestial groups, which seem introduced merely as exercises or exhibitions of technical skill, rather than as appeals to our imagination or finer feelings. . . . On the whole you are again tempted to be somewhat out of conceit with Tintoretto, till you pause in the Ante Collegio, or guard-room, before a picture of his so poetically conceived and admirably wrought, indeed so pleasing in all respects, that you wonder still more at the dull, uninteresting character of so many of the others. Yes, here *Il Furioso* Tintoretto, leaving ostentatious, barren displays of technical power, has once again had the gentleness and patience to make himself thoroughly agreeable. Ariadne, a beautiful and noble figure, is seated undraped on a rock, and Bacchus, profusely crowned with ivy, advances from the sea, and offers her the nuptial ring; whilst above, Venus, her back towards you, lying horizon-

tally in the pale blue air, as if the blue air were her natural couch, spreads or rather kindles, a chaplet or circlet of stars round Ariadne's head. Here, those who luxuriate in what is typical, may tell us, and probably not without truth, that Tintoretto wished to convey a graceful hint of Venice crowned by beauty and blessed with joy and abundance. Bacchus arising from the sea well signifies these latter gifts, and the watery path by which they come to her; and the lonely island nymph to whom he presents the wedding-ring, may be intended to refer to the situation and original forlornness of Venice herself, when she sat in solitude amidst the sandy isles of the lagune, aloof from her parental shores, ravaged by the Hun or the Lombard. The pale yellow sunshine on these nude figures and their light transparent shadows, and the mild temperate blue of the calm sea and air, almost completing the most simple arrangement of the colouring of the picture, are still beautiful, and no doubt were far more so before its lamentable fading, occasioned, it seems, by too much exposure to light; you feel quite out of doors, all on the airy cliffs, as you look on it, and almost taste the very freshness of the sea-breeze.

*The Art Journal* (London, 1857).

## LA CRUCHE CASSÉE

(*GREUZE*)

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

ONE might say of Greuze, as of Hogarth, that the moral scenes which he represents appear to have been posed for and acted by excellent actors rather than copied directly from nature. This is the truth, but seen, however, through an interpretation and under a travesty of rusticity. All is reasoned out, full of purpose, and leading to an end. There is in every stroke what the *littérateurs* call ideas when they talk about painting. Thus Diderot has celebrated Greuze in the most lyric strain. Greuze, however, is not a mediocre artist: he invented a *genre* unknown before his time, and he possesses veritable qualities of a painter. He has colour, he has touch, and his heads, modelled by square plans and, so to speak, by facets, have relief and life. His draperies, or rather his rumpled linen, torn and treated grossly in a systematic fashion to give full value to the delicacy of the flesh, reveal in their very negligence an easy brush. *La Malédiction Paternelle* and *Le Fils Maudit* are homilies that are well painted and of a practical moral, but we prefer *L'Accordée du Village*, on account of the adorable head of the *fiancée;* it is impossible to find anything younger, fresher, more inno-



La Cruche Cassée.
*Greuze.*

cent and more coquettishly virginal, if these two words may be connected. Greuze, and this is the cause of the renown which he enjoys now after the eclipse of his glory caused by the intervention of David and his school, has a very individual talent for painting woman in her first bloom, when the bud is about to burst into the rose and the child is about to become a maiden. As in the Eighteenth Century all the world was somewhat libertine, even the moralists, Greuze, when he painted an Innocence, always took pains to open the gauze and give a glimpse of the curve of the swelling bosom; he puts into the eyes a fiery lustre and upon the lips a dewy smile that suggests the idea that Innocence might very easily become Voluptuousness.

*La Cruche Cassée* is the model of this *genre*. The head has still the innocence of childhood, but the fichu is disarranged, the rose at the corsage is dropping its leaves, the flowers are only half held in the fold of the gown and the jug allows the water to escape through its fissure.

*Guide de l'Amateur au Musée du Louvre* (Paris, 1882).

## PORTRAIT OF LADY COCKBURN AND HER CHILDREN

(*REYNOLDS*)

FREDERIC G. STEPHENS

THE number of Reynolds's portraits of ladies has never been given, probably it cannot be ascertained with precision; it is beyond all question marvellous, but not less so is the variety of the attitudes in which he placed the sitters, that of the ideas he expressed, and of the accessories with which they are surrounded; to this end, and to show how successfully he fitted things together, background and figure, compare the portrait of *Elizabeth Hamilton, Countess of Derby*, splendidly engraved by W. Dickinson, with that of Lady Betty Delmé. It is the same everywhere.

We believe that Reynolds, of that English school of portrait-painters of which he was the founder, was the happiest in introducing backgrounds to his works; to him we are for the most part indebted for that aptitude of one to the other which has so great an effect in putting the eye and mind of the observer into harmonious relationship with what may be called the *motive* of the portrait, which, indeed, elevates a mere likeness to the character of a picture, and affords a charming field for the display of art in pathos, which is too often neglected, if not utterly ignored, by Reynolds's successors. We think he exhibited more of



PORTRAIT OF LADY COCKBURN AND HER CHILDREN.
*Reynolds.*

this valuable characteristic than any other contemporary artist. Lawrence aimed at it, but with effect only commensurate to his success in painting. Of old, as before the Seventeenth Century in Germany and Italy, the art of landscape-painting *per se* was inefficiently cultivated, at least expressed with irregularity, although occasionally with force enough to show that the pathos as well as the beauty of nature were by no means unappreciated or neglected to anything like the extent which has been commonly represented by writers on Art. Reynolds probably took the hint, as he did many others of the kind, from Vandyck, and gave apt backgrounds to his figures: between these painters no one did much, or even well in the pathetic part of the achievement. Since Reynolds, none have approached him in success. It will be understood that the object of these remarks is not to suggest for the reader's consideration who painted the best landscape backgrounds as landscapes, but who most happily adapted them to his more important themes. We believe Reynolds did so, and will conclude our remarks by another example. The landscape in the distance of *The Age of Innocence* is as thoroughly in keeping with the subject as it can be: thus here are fields easy to traverse, a few village elms, and just seen above their tops the summits of habitations, — the hint is thus given that the child, all innocent as she is, has not gone far from home, or out of sight of the household to which she belongs. . . .

It has been alleged that Reynolds never, or rarely painted the landscape backgrounds to his pictures, and that they were the work of Peter Toms, R. A., one of his

ablest assistants, or of others who were more potent with that branch of Art than the President himself. . . . It is hard to deny to the mind which conceived the ruling idea of such pictures that honour which is assuredly due to some one, and to whom more probably than to the painter of the faces and designer of the attitudes, which are in such perfect harmony with the subordinate elements about them as to be completed only when the alliance is made. Without this alliance, this harmony of parts, half the significance of many of Reynolds's pictures is obscured. When we have noted this the result is at least instructive, if not convincing, that one mind designed, if one hand did not invariably execute, the whole of any important portrait by our subject.

Our own belief is, that whenever the landscapes or other accessories of his productions are essential to the idea expressed by the work as a whole, then undoubtedly Reynolds wrought these minor parts almost wholly, if not entirely, with his own brushes.

Few, if any, of Reynolds's family groups equals in beauty, variety, and spirit, the famous *Cornelia and her Children*, or rather *Lady Cockburn and her three Infants*, — a work so charming, that we can well conceive the feelings of the Royal Academicians of 1774, that long-past time, when it was brought to be hung in the Exhibition, and received with clapping of hands, as men applaud a successful musical performance, or the fine reading of a poem. Every Royal Academician then present — the scene must have been a very curious one — stepped forward, and in this manner saluted the work of the President; they did so,

not because it was his, but on account of its charming qualities. Conceive the painters, each in his swallow-tailed coat, his ruffles and broad cuffs, his knee-breeches, buckles, long waistcoat, and the rest of his garments of those days, thus uniting in one acclaim. The reader may judge whether or not such applause was deserved by the picture, which tells its own story. The parrot in the background was occasionally used by Reynolds; see the portrait of Elizabeth, Countess of Derby, and the engraving from it by W. Dickinson.[1] It has been said that the only example of Reynolds's practice in signing pictures on the border of the robes of his sitters appears in *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse*; nevertheless, this picture of *Cornelia* shows at least one exception to that asserted rule. The border of Lady Cockburn's dress in the original is inscribed in a similar manner thus: — "1775, Reynolds *pinxit*." The picture was begun in 1773, and is now in the possession of Sir James Hamilton, of Portman Square, who married the daughter of General Sir James Cockburn, one of the boys in the picture. It is noteworthy that all these children successively inherited the baronetcy; one of them — the boy who looks over his mother's shoulder — was Admiral Sir George Cockburn, Bart., on board whose ship, the *Northumberland*, Napoleon was conveyed to St. Helena. Sir James, the eldest brother, was afterwards seventh baronet; Sir William, the third brother, was eighth baronet of the name, was Dean of York, and

1 Rather we should say, see the engraving only. The picture is one of the very few prime works by Reynolds which has disappeared without records of its loss.

married a daughter of Sir R. Peel. The lady was Augusta Anne, daughter of the Rev. Frances Ascough, D.D., Dean of Bristol, married in 1769, the second wife of Sir James Cockburn, sixth baronet of Langton, in the county of Berwick, M. P. She was niece of Lord Lyttleton. For this picture in March, 1774, Reynolds received £183 15s. This was probably the whole price, and for a work of no great size, but wealthy in matter, the amount was small indeed. It includes four portraits. After comparison of the facts that the engravings, by C. W. Wilkin, in stipple, and by S. W. Reynolds, mezzotint, are dated, on the robe as aforesaid, "1775," and its exhibition in 1774, the year in which it was paid for, we may guess that the signature and date were added by the painter after exhibiting it, and probably while he worked on it, with the advantage of having compared the painting with others in the Royal Academy. The landscape recalls that glimpse of halcyon country of which we caught sight in *The Infant Academy* — its trees, its glowing sky, are equally adaptable to both subjects. The picture was exhibited at the British Institution in 1843, and was then the property of Sir James Cockburn, Bart., whose portrait it contains.

*English Children as painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London, 1867).

## ST. CECILIA

(*RAPHAEL*)

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

I HAVE seen a quantity of things here — churches, palaces, statues, fountains, and pictures; and my brain is at this moment like a portfolio of an architect, or a print-shop, or a common-place book. I will try to recollect something of what I have seen; for indeed it requires, if it will obey, an act of volition. First, we went to the Cathedral, which contains nothing remarkable, except a kind of shrine, or rather a marble canopy, loaded with sculptures, and supported on four marble columns. We went then to a palace — I am sure I forget the name of it — where we saw a large gallery of pictures. Of course, in a picture gallery you see three hundred pictures you forget, for one you remember. I remember, however, an interesting picture by Guido, of the Rape of Proserpine, in which Proserpine casts back her languid and half-unwilling eyes, as it were, to the flowers she had left ungathered in the fields of Enna.

We saw besides one picture of Raphael — St. Cecilia; this is in another and higher style; you forget that it is a picture as you look at it; and yet it is most unlike any of those things which we call reality. It is of the inspired and ideal kind, and seems to have been conceived and

executed in a similar state of feeling to that which produced among the ancients those perfect specimens of poetry and sculpture which are the baffling models of succeeding generations. There is a unity and a perfection in it of an incommunicable kind. The central figure, St. Cecilia, seems rapt in such inspiration as produced her image in the painter's mind; her deep, dark, eloquent eyes lifted up; her chestnut hair flung back from her forehead — she holds an organ in her hands — her countenance, as it were, calmed by the depth of its passion and rapture, and penetrated throughout with the warm and radiant light of life. She is listening to the music of heaven, and, as I imagine, has just ceased to sing, for the four figures that surround her evidently point, by their attitudes, towards her; particularly St. John, who, with a tender yet impassioned gesture, bends his countenance towards her, languid with the depth of his emotion. At her feet lie various instruments of music, broken and unstrung. Of the colouring I do not speak; it eclipses nature, yet has all her truth and softness.

*Letters from Italy*. *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, edited by Harry Buxton Forman (London, 1880).



St. Cecilia.
*Raphael.*

## THE LAST SUPPER

### (*LEONARDO DA VINCI*)

### JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

WE will now turn to *The Last Supper*, which was painted on the wall of the refectory of St. Maria delle Gratie in Milan.

The place where this picture is painted must first be considered: for here the knowledge of this artist is focussed. Could anything more appropriate, or noble, be devised for a refectory than a parting meal which the whole world will reverence for ever?

Several years ago when travelling we beheld this dining-room still undestroyed. Opposite the entrance on the narrow end on the floor of the hall stands the prior's table with a table for the monks on either side, all three raised a step above the ground, and now when the visitor turns around he sees painted on the wall, above the not very high doors, a fourth table, at which are seated Christ and His disciples, as if they also belonged to this company. It must have been an impressive sight at meal times when the tables of Christ and the prior looked upon each other like two pictures, and the monks found themselves enclosed between them. And, for this very reason, the artist's judgment selected the tables of the monks for a model. Also the table-cloth, with its creased folds, embroidered

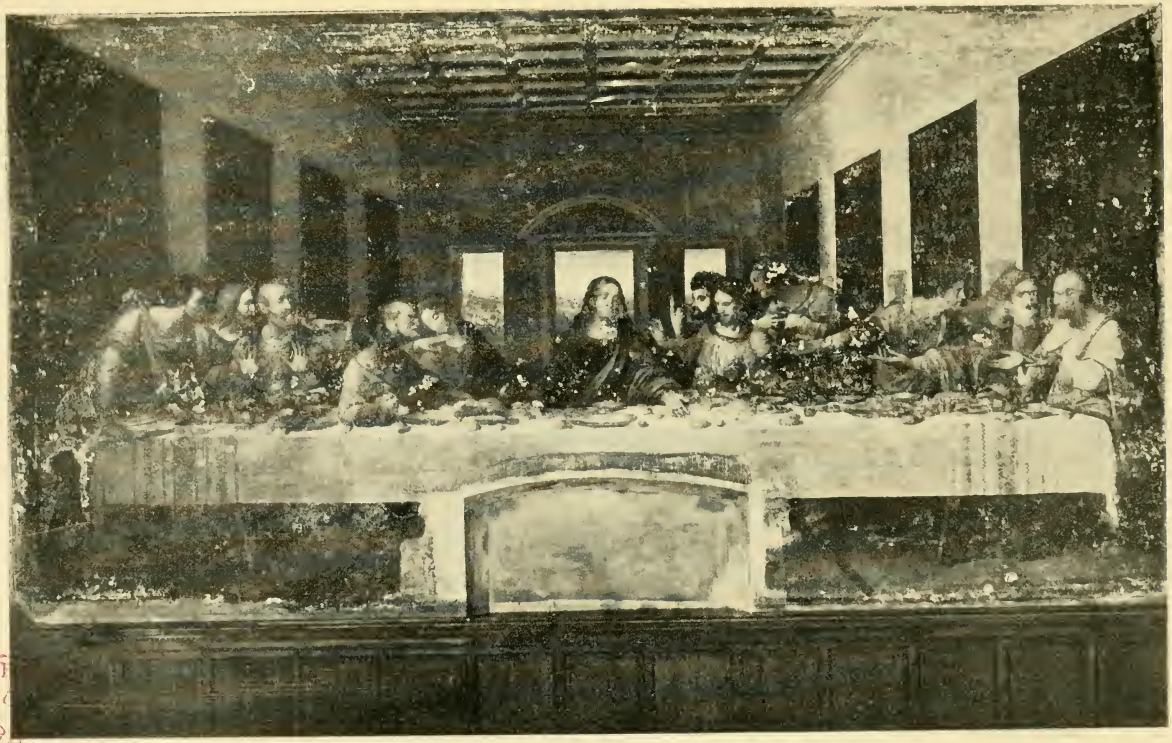
stripes, and tied corners, was taken from the linen-room of the monastery, while the dishes, plates, drinking-vessels, and other utensils are similarly copied from those used by the monks.

Here, also, no attempt was made to depict an uncertain and antiquated custom. It would have been extremely unsuitable in this place to permit the holy company to recline upon cushions. No! it should be made contemporary. Christ should take His Last Supper with the Dominicans in Milan.

In many other respects also the picture must have produced a great effect. About ten feet above the floor the thirteen figures, each one half larger than life-size, occupy a space twenty-eight Parisian feet long. Only two of these can be seen at full length at the opposite ends of the table, the others are half-figures, and here, too, the artist found great advantage in the conditions. Every moral expression belongs solely to the upper part of the body, and the feet, in such cases, are always in the way; the artist has created here eleven half-figures, whose laps and knees are hidden by the table and table-cloth under which the feet in the deep shadow are scarcely visible.

Now, let us transport ourselves to this place and room, imagine the extreme moral repose which reigns in such a monastic dining-hall, and marvel at the strong emotion and impassioned action that the painter has put into his picture whilst he has kept his work of art close to nature, bringing it immediately in contrast with the neighbouring actual scene.

The exciting means which the artist employed to agitate



THE LAST SUPPER.
*L. da Vinci.*

the tranquil and holy Supper-Table are the Master's words: "There is one amongst you that betrays me." The words are spoken, and the entire company falls into consternation; but He inclines His head with downcast looks; the whole attitude, the motion of the arms, the hands, and everything repeat with heavenly resignation which the silence itself confirms, "Verily, verily, there is one amongst you that betrays Me."

Before going any farther we must point out a great expedient, by means of which Leonardo principally animated this picture: it is the motion of the hands; only an Italian would have discovered this. With his nation the whole body is expressive, all the limbs take part in describing an emotion, not only passion but also thought. By various gestures he can express: "What do I care?" — "Come here!" — "This is a rascal, beware of him!" "He shall not live long!" "This is a main point. Take heed of this, my hearers!" To such a national trait, Leonardo, who observed every characteristic with the greatest attention, must have turned his searching eye; in this the present picture is unique and one cannot observe it too much. The expression of every face and every gesture is in perfect harmony, and yet a single glance can take in the unity and the contrast of the limbs rendered so admirably.

The figures on both sides of our Lord may be considered in groups of three, and each group may be regarded as a unit, placed in relation and still held in connection with its neighbours. On Christ's immediate right are John, Judas, and Peter.

Peter, the farthest, on hearing the words of our Lord, rises suddenly, in conformity with his vehement character, behind Judas, who, looking up with terrified countenance, leans over the table, tightly clutching the purse with his right hand, whilst with the left he makes an involuntary nervous motion as if to say: "What may this mean? What is to happen?" Peter, meanwhile, with his left hand has seized the right shoulder of John, who is bending towards him, and points to Christ, at the same time urging the beloved disciple to ask: "Who is the traitor?" He accidentally touches Judas's side with the handle of a knife held in his right hand, which occasions the terrified forward movement upsetting the salt-cellar, so happily brought out. This group may be considered as the one first thought of by the artist; it is the most perfect.

While now on the right hand of the Lord a certain degree of emotion seems to threaten immediate revenge, on the left, the liveliest horror and detestation of the treachery manifest themselves. James the Elder starts back in terror, and with outspread arms gazes transfixed with bowed head, like one who imagines that he already beholds with his eyes what his ears have heard. Thomas appears behind his shoulder, and approaching the Saviour raises the forefinger of his right hand to his forehead. Philip, the third of this group, rounds it off in the most pleasing manner; he has risen, he bends forward towards the Master, lays his hands upon his breast, and says with the greatest clearness: "It is not I, Lord, Thou knowest it! Thou knowest my pure heart, it is not I."

And now the three last figures on this side give us new

material for reflection. They are discussing the terrible news. Matthew turns his face eagerly to his two companions on the left, hastily stretching out his hands towards the Master, and thus, by an admirable contrivance of the artist, he is made to connect his own group with the preceding one. Thaddæus shows the utmost surprise, doubt, and suspicion; his left hand rests upon the table, while he has raised the right as if he intended to strike his left hand with the back of his right, a very common action with simple people when some unexpected occurrence leads them to say: "Did I not tell you so? Did I not always suspect it?" — Simon sits at the end of the table with great dignity, and we see his whole figure; he is the oldest of all and wears a garment with rich folds, his face and gesture show that he is troubled and thoughtful but not excited, indeed, scarcely moved.

If we now turn our eyes to the opposite end of the table, we see Bartholomew, who rests on his right foot with the left crossed over it, supporting his inclined body by firmly resting his hands upon the table. He is probably trying to hear what John will ask of the Lord: this whole side appears to be inciting the favourite disciple. James the Younger, standing near and behind Bartholomew, lays his left hand on Peter's shoulder, just as Peter lays his on John's shoulder, but James mildly requests the explanation whilst Peter already threatens vengeance.

And as Peter behind Judas, so James the Younger stretches out his hand behind Andrew, who, as one of the most prominent figures expresses, with his half-raised arms and his hands stretched out directly in front, the fixed horror

that has seized him, an attitude occurring but once in this picture; while in other works of less genius and less reflection, it is too often repeated. . . .

It is sad to reflect that unfortunately even when the picture was painted, its ruin might have been predicted from the character and situation of the building. Duke Louis, out of malice or caprice, compelled the monks to renovate their decaying monastery in this unfavourable location, wherefore it was ill-built and as if by forced feudal labour. In the old galleries we see miserable meanly-wrought columns, great arches with small ill-assorted bricks, the materials from old pulled-down buildings.

If then what is visible on the exterior is so bad, it is also to be feared that the inner walls, which were plastered over, were constructed still worse. This is saying nothing of weather-beaten bricks and other minerals saturated with hurtful salts which absorbed the dampness of the locality and destructively exhaled it again. Farther away stood the unfortunate walls to which such a great treasure was entrusted, towards the north, and, moreover in the vicinity of the kitchen, the pantry, and the scullery; and how sad, that so careful an artist, who could not select and refine his colours and clear his glaze and varnish too carefully, was compelled by the circumstances, or rather by the place and situation in which the picture had to stand, to overlook the chief point upon which everything depended, or not to take it sufficiently to heart!

However, despite all this, if the monastery had stood upon high ground, the evil would not have been so great. It lies so low, and the Refectory lower than the rest of the

building, that in the year 1800, during a long rain, the water stood to a depth of three palms, which leads us also to believe that the frightful floods of 1500 also extended to this place. It is to be remembered that the monks did their best to dry out this room, but unfortunately there remained enough humidity to penetrate it through and through; and they were even sensible of this in Leonardo's time.

About ten years after the completion of the picture, a terrible plague overran the good city, and how could we expect that the afflicted monks, forsaken by all the world and in fear of death, should think of the picture in their dining-room?

War and numerous other misfortunes which overtook Lombardy in the first half of the Sixteenth Century were the cause of the complete neglect of such works as the one we are speaking of; the white-washed wall being especially unfavourable: perhaps, indeed, the very style of painting lent itself to speedy destruction. In the second half of the Sixteenth Century a traveller says that the picture is half spoiled; another sees in it only a tarnished blot; people complain that the picture is already lost, assuredly it can scarcely be seen; another calls it perfectly useless, and so speak all the later authors of this period.

But the picture was still there, even if it was the shadow of its former self. Now, however, from time to time fear arises lest it be lost entirely; the cracks are increasing and run into one another, and the great and precious surface is splitting into numberless small flakes and threatening to fall piece by piece. Touched by this state of affairs, Cardi-

nal Frederick Borromeo had a copy of it made in 1612, and we are grateful for his forethought.

Not only did it suffer by the lapse of time, in connection with the above-mentioned circumstances, but the owners, themselves, who should have kept and preserved it, wrought its greatest ruin and therefore have covered their memory with eternal shame. It seemed to them necessary to have doors that they might pass in and out of the Refectory; so these were cut symmetrically through the wall upon which the picture stood. They desired an impressive entrance into the room which was so precious to them.

A door much larger than was necessary was broken through the middle, and, without any feeling of reverence either for the painter or the holy company, they ruined the feet of several apostles, indeed, even of Christ. And from this, the ruin of the picture really dates. Now, in order to build an arch, a much larger opening had to be made in the wall than even for the door; and not only was a large portion of the picture lost, but the blows of hammers shook the picture in its own field, and in many places the crust was loosened and some pieces were fastened on again with nails.

At a later period, by a new form of bad taste, the picture was obscured, inasmuch as a national escutcheon was fastened under the ceiling, almost touching the forehead of Christ; thus by the door from below, so now from above also, the Lord's presence was cramped and degraded. From this time forward the restoration was again spoken of which was undertaken at a later period. But what real

artist would care to undertake such a responsibility? Unfortunately, in the year 1726, Bellotti presented himself, poor in art, but at the same time, as is usual, with an abundant supply of presumption. He, like a charlatan, boasted of a secret process with which he could restore the picture to its original state. By means of a small sample of his work he deluded the ignorant monks who yielded to his discretion this treasure, which he immediately surrounded with scaffolding, and, hidden behind it, he painted over the entire picture with a hand shaming to art. The little monks wondered at the secret, which he communicated in a common varnish to delude them, and gave them to understand that with this they would be able to save it from spoiling for ever.

Whether, on the clouding of the picture after a short time, the monks made use of this costly remedy or not, is unknown, but it certainly was freshened up several times, and indeed with water-colours in certain parts.

Meanwhile the picture had become constantly more decayed, and again the question arose how far it could still be preserved, but not without much contention among artists and directors. De Giorgi, a modest man of moderate talent, but intelligent and zealous and with a knowledge of true art, steadfastly refused to set his hand forward where Leonardo had withheld his own.

At last, in 1770, on a well-meaning order but one void of discretion, through the indulgence of a courtly prior, the work was transferred to a certain Mazza, who botched it in a masterly manner. The few old original spots remaining, although twice muddied by a foreign hand, were

an impediment to his free brush; so he scraped them with iron and prepared bare places for the free play of his own impudent daubing, indeed, several heads were handled in this way.

Friends of art were now aroused against that in Milan, and patrons and clients were openly blamed. Enthusiasm fed the fire and the fermentation became general. Mazza, who had begun to paint on the right of the Saviour, had by this arrived at the left, and only the heads of Matthew, Thaddæus, and Simon remained untouched. He thought to cover Bellotti's work and to vie with him in the name of a hero. But Fate willed otherwise, for the pliant prior having been transferred, his successor, a friend of art, did not delay to dismiss Mazza forthwith; through which step three heads were so far saved that we can accordingly judge of Bellotti. And, indeed, this circumstance probably gave rise to the saying: "There are still three heads of the genuine original remaining."

In 1796, the French host crossed the Alps triumphantly, led by General Bonaparte. Young, crowned with fame and seeking fame, he was drawn by the name of Leonardo to the place that has now held us so long.

He immediately gave orders that no encampment should be made here lest other damage should happen, and signed the order on his knee before he mounted his horse. Shortly afterwards another general disregarded these orders, had the doors broken in, and turned the hall into a stable.

Mazza's coating had already lost some of its freshness and the horse steam which was worse than the steam from viands on monkish sideboards lastingly impregnated the

walls, and added new mould to the picture; indeed, dampness collected so heavily that it ran down leaving white streaks. Later, this room was used for storing hay, and sometimes for other purposes connected with the military, by whom it was abused.

Finally the Administration succeeded in closing the place, and even walling it in, so that for a long time those who wished to see *The Last Supper* were obliged to climb a ladder leading to the pulpit from which the Reader discoursed at meal times.

In the year 1800, a great flood produced still more dampness. In 1801, on the recommendation of Vossi, who took it upon himself to assume the Secretaryship of the Academy, a door was built and the board of governors promised more care in the future. Finally, in 1807, the Viceroy of Italy gave orders that the place should be renovated and duly honoured. Windows were put in and scaffolding was erected in some parts to examine if there was anything more that could be done. The door was transferred to the side, and since then no considerable changes have been noticed, although to the minute observer its dullness varies according to the state of the atmosphere. Although the work itself is as good as lost, may it yet leave some slight trace to the sad but pious memory of future generations!

*Werke* (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1831), Vol. XXXIX.

## THE CHILDREN OF CHARLES I.

### (*VAN DYCK*)

### JULES GUIFFREY

UPON his arrival [in England] Anthonius was temporarily lodged at the house of Edward Norgate, a *protégé* of the Earl of Arundel, charged by the King to provide for all the needs of his guest. Another such installation could not be repeated. The sovereign himself took pains to find a suitable establishment for his painter. Mr. Carpenter cites a very curious note on this subject. Charles I. wrote with his own hand, — "To speak with Inigo Jones concerning a house for Vandike." This house demanded the combination of certain conditions very difficult to meet with. It was necessary that the artist should be comfortably established; and, on the other hand, the King wished him not to be too far from the palace. The architect was able to satisfy all these requirements. A winter residence was found for Van Dyck in Blackfriars on the right bank of the Thames. From his palace in Whitehall, Charles I., crossing the river in his barge, could conveniently reach the studio of his favourite painter. He took great pleasure in watching him at work and loved to forget himself during the long hours charmed by the wit and innate distinction of his entertainer. During the summer season, Van Dyck lived



Portrait of the Children of Charles I.

*Van Dyck.*

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at Eltham in the county of Kent. He probably occupied an apartment or some dependency of one of the palaces of the Crown. An annual pension of two hundred pounds sterling was assigned to him, first of all to enable him to support a household worthy of the title bestowed upon him, — "Principal Painter in Ordinary." The portraits commanded by the King were paid for independently. The remuneration for his works finally provided the artist with that brilliant and gorgeous life which had been his ambition for so long and which an assiduous industry had not been able to procure for him in Flanders. He had no less than six servants and several horses; at all periods, as we know, he always bestowed much care and refinement upon his toilet. Frequenting an elegant and frivolous court could not but develop this natural disposition for all the quests of luxury.

Three months after his arrival, Van Dyck was included in a creation of knights made on July 5, 1632. Charles I. added still more to this favour by the gift of a chain of gold bearing a miniature of himself enriched with diamonds. In many of his portraits the artist is represented with this mark of royal munificence.

It now devolved upon him to justify the high position to which he found himself so rapidly elevated. An act of the Privy Seal pointed out by Mr. Carpenter shows us that Van Dyck lost no time in satisfying the impatience of his royal protector. On August 8, 1632, the sum of £224 was allowed him from the royal treasury for various works of painting. The enumeration of these pictures furnishes precious details for the price of the artist's works

It seems that from the very beginning, a kind of tariff was adopted with common accord, according to the size of each portrait. The price of a whole length portrait was £25; other canvases only fetched £20; that refers probably to personages at half length. Finally, a large family picture, representing the King, the Queen, and their two children attained the sum of £100. At a later period, these figures were increased and the price of a full length portrait was raised to £40.

But how many of these works, in which, however, very great qualities shine, pale before a canvas of the Master preserved in the Museum of Turin! We mean the picture in which the three young children of Charles I. are grouped — the Prince of Wales, the Princess Henrietta Maria who became the Duchess of Orleans, and the Duke of York. All three are still in long dresses, therefore the eldest was about five or six years old at most; all three are standing up, and for that reason we cannot give the youngest less than eighteen months or two years. This circumstance dates the picture — it was painted in 1635.

We know the various portraits of the children of Charles I. disseminated in the museums and palaces of Europe; we have seen and admired the picture in Dresden, those at Windsor, the sketch in the Louvre, and the canvas in Berlin, a copy of the great composition which belongs to the Queen of England. Very well! there is not the slightest hesitation possible — not one of these pictures is comparable to that in Turin. Nowhere does there exist a work of Van Dyck's so delicate, so well preserved, and so perfect in all its points. With what care and worship this

picture is surrounded no one can imagine. The most watchful precautions and the most respectful regard are at its service. We have been told that the directors of the Museum constantly refuse to move it for the convenience of photographers. A little detail hardly worth mentioning, one would say! We do not think so. We consider that the authorities of the Museum are right a thousand times, when they possess such a *chef-d'œuvre*, not to neglect any precaution, however insignificant it may appear, to assure it a longer duration.

A fine engraving of this incomparable jewel gives a very exact idea of the arrangement and dominating qualities of the picture; but how can we translate in black and white the shimmering of material, the delicacy of tone, the colouring of those robes, rose, blue, and white, of exquisite harmony and incomparable finesse.

What shall we say of the physiognomy, of the grace, and also the penetrating charm of those three child figures? Such a work would alone suffice for the glory of a museum, above all when it has kept its freshness like the flowering of genius.

Every moment of the painter was consecrated to the various members of the royal family. That was natural enough. Charles I. never desisted from watching his clever *protégé* at work, and spending his leisure in his studio, — the habitual *rendez-vous* of the young gentlemen and the beauties of fashion. The establishment of the artist permitted him to receive such guests becomingly. Hired musicians were instructed to divert his aristocratic models during the hours of work. Thus he was enabled to attract

and hold at his home the very best society in London. Every day at his table sat numerous guests chosen from the *élite* of the artists and *littérateurs* mingled with the greatest personages. Carried into the whirlwind of this light world so full of entertainment, Van Dyck hastened to enjoy all the pleasures and exhaust all the delights, without considering his strength, or hoarding his health. . . .

The King would never let him stop painting the pictures of his children. On his side, Van Dyck brought to this task all his art, we might say all his heart. Doubtless, he derived from Rubens and also from Van Balen that very lively intelligence for the graces of childhood. Also, when he occupied himself in rendering those delicious faces of rosy and chubby babies, in the midst of glimmering stuffs, he found colours of incomparable freshness. . . .

Every artist of high degree carries within himself the ideal type whose expression he pursues without pause. This search imprints upon each of his works the characteristic mark of genius: originality. Thus we recognize at the first glance the giants that sprang from the brain of Michael Angelo, the enigmatical sirens of da Vinci, and those superhuman figures with which Raphael has peopled his immortal compositions. Titian lived in a world of kings and magnificent princes. Correggio's individuality is grace of form and charm of colour; his portion is not to be scorned. The exuberant nature of Rubens betrays itself in his least important canvases. The personages of his innumerable pictures share in common the affinities of race and family which make them recognizable everywhere.

Anthonius Van Dyck obeys, likewise, the common law.

Each of his works is marked by that sign of originality, which in him consists of the incessant pursuit of elegance and distinction. Distinction, — that is the gift *par excellence*, the dominating quality of this artist, that which constitutes his individuality, that which marks with an indelible imprint all his glorious works, from the first groupings of the pupil of Rubens to those immortal images of Charles I., his family, and his court.

Whether he belongs to the highest spheres of society or whether he comes from the simple *bourgeoisie* of Antwerp, the model receives from Van Dyck's brush the most aristocratic mien. One would insist that the painter spent his life only in a world of gentlemen and patricians. Never does he surprise even the men that he knows the best, his most intimate friends, in the familiar carelessness of their daily occupations. Rarely, very rarely, does it come into his mind to group them in some intimate interior scene. Everybody is made to pose before posterity; each sitter has the smile to give his or her descendants the most exalted idea of his or her station and manners. Not one is vulgar, not one dares to show himself in his ordinary work, or in the careless good nature of daily life. Nothing alters their immutable serenity; nothing troubles the unalterable placidity of their physiognomy. Let others paint the people of taverns, the world of *kermesses* and peasants! Van Dyck wished to be and to live for ever the painter of aristocracy.

*Antoine Van Dyck — sa vie et sonnœuvre.* (Paris, 1882).

## THE FIGHTING TÉMÉRAIRE TUGGED TO HER LAST BERTH TO BE BROKEN UP, 1838

(*TURNER*)

JOHN RUSKIN

"The flag which braved the battle and the breeze
No longer owns her."

EXHIBITED at the Academy in 1839, with the above lines cited in the Catalogue. Of all Turner's pictures in the National Gallery this is perhaps the most notable. For, *first* it is the last picture he ever painted with *perfect* power — the last in which his execution is as firm and faultless as in middle life; the last in which lines requiring exquisite precision, such as those of the masts and yards of shipping, are drawn rightly at once. When he painted the *Téméraire* Turner could, if he liked, have painted the *Shipwreck* or the *Ulysses* over again; but when he painted the *Sun of Venice*, though he was able to do different, and in some sort more beautiful things, he could not have done *those* again. His period of central power thus begins with the *Ulysses* and closes with the *Téméraire*. The one picture, it will be observed, is of sunrise, the other of sunset. The one of a ship entering on its voyage, and the other of a ship closing its course for ever. The one, in all the circumstance of the subject, unconsciously



The Fighting Téméraire.

*Turner.*

illustrative of his own life in its triumph, the other, in all the circumstances of its subject, unconsciously illustrative of his own life in its decline. Accurately as the first sets forth his escape to the wild brightness of nature, to reign amidst all her happy spirits, so does the last set forth his returning to die by the shore of the Thames. And besides having been painted in Turner's full power, the *Téméraire* is of all his large pictures the best preserved. *Secondly*, the subject of the picture is, both particularly and generally, the noblest that in an English National Gallery could be. The *Téméraire* was the second ship in Nelson's line at the Battle of Trafalgar; and this picture is the last of the group which Turner painted to illustrate that central struggle in our national history. The part played by the *Téméraire* in the battle will be found detailed below. And, generally, she is a type of one of England's chief glories. It will be always said of us, with unabated reverence, "They built ships of the line." Take it all in all, a Ship of the Line is the most honourable thing that man as a gregarious animal, has ever produced. By himself, unhelped, he can do better things than ships of the line; he can make poems and pictures, and other such concentrations of what is best in him. But as a being living in flocks, and hammering out, with alternate strokes and mutual agreement, what is necessary for him in those flocks, to get or produce, the ship of the line is his first work. And as the subject was the noblest Turner could have chosen so also was his treatment of it. Of all pictures of subjects not visibly involving human pain, this is, I believe, the most pathetic that was ever painted. The

utmost pensiveness which can ordinarily be given to a landscape depends on adjuncts of ruin; but no ruin was ever so affecting as this gliding of the vessel to her grave. A ruin cannot be so, for whatever memories may be connected with it, and whatever witness it may have borne to the courage and glory of men, it never seems to have offered itself to their danger, and associated itself with their acts, as a ship of battle can. The mere facts of motion, and obedience to human guidance, double the interest of the vessel: nor less her organized perfectness, giving her the look, and partly the character of a living creature, that may indeed be maimed in limb or decrepit in frame, but must either live or die, and cannot be added to nor diminished from — heaped up and dragged down — as a building can. And this particular ship, crowned in the Trafalgar hour of trial with chief victory — prevailing over the fatal vessel that had given Nelson death — surely, if ever anything without a soul deserved honour or affection, we owed them here. Those sails that strained so full bent into the battle — that broad bow that struck the surf aside, enlarging silently in steadfast haste full front to the shot — resistless and without reply — those triple ports whose choirs of flame rang forth in their courses, into the fierce revenging monotone, which, when it died away, left no answering voice to rise any more upon the sea against the strength of England — those sides that were wet with the long runlets of English life-blood, like press planks at vintage, gleaming goodly crimson down to the cast and clash of the washing foam — those pale masts that stayed themselves up against the war-ruin, shaking out their en-

signs through the thunder, till sail and ensign drooped — steeped in the death-stilled pause of Andalusian air, burning with its witness-clouds of human souls at rest, — surely, for these some sacred care might have been left in our thoughts, some quiet space amidst the lapse of English waters? Nay, not so. We have stern keepers to trust her glory to — the fire and the worm. Never more shall sunset lay golden robe on her, nor starlight tremble on the waves that part at her gliding. Perhaps, where the low gate opens to some cottage-garden, the tired traveller may ask, idly, why the moss grows so green on its rugged wood; and even the sailor's child may not answer, nor know, that the night-dew lies deep in the war-rents of the wood of the old *Téméraire*. And, *lastly*, the pathos of the picture — the contrast of the old ship's past glory with her present end; and the spectacle of the "old order" of the ship of the line whose flag had braved the battle and the breeze, yielding place to the new, in the little steam-tug — these pathetic contrasts are repeated and enforced by a technical *tour de force* in the treatment of the colours which is without a parallel in art. And the picture itself thus combines the evidences of Turner's supremacy alike in imagination and in skill. The old masters, content with one simple tone, sacrificed to its unity all the exquisite gradations and varied touches of relief and change by which nature unites her hours with each other. They gave the warmth of the sinking sun, overwhelming all things in its gold, but they did not give those gray passages about the horizon, where, seen through its dying light, the cool and the gloom of night gather themselves for their victory. . . . But in

this picture, under the blazing veil of vaulted fire, which lights the vessel on her last path, there is a blue, deep, desolate hollow of darkness out of which you can hear the voice of the night wind, and the dull boom of the disturbed sea; the cold deadly shadows of the twilight are gathering through every sunbeam, and moment by moment, as you look, you will fancy some new film and faintness of the night has risen over the vastness of the departing form. (Compiled from *Modern Painters*, Vol. I. pt. ii. Sec. I. ch vii. § 46 *n.*, Sec. II. ch i. § 21; *Harbours of England*, p. 12; and *Notes on the Turner Gallery*, pp. 75–80.)

Finally a few words about the history of the picture itself may be interesting. The subject of it was suggested to Turner by Clarkson Stanfield (who himself, it will be remembered, had painted a *Battle of Trafalgar*). They were going down the river by boat, to dine, perhaps, at Greenwich, when the old ship, being tugged to her last berth at Deptford, came in sight. "There's a fine subject, Turner," said Stanfield. This was in 1838. Next year the picture was exhibited at the Academy, but no price was put upon it. A would-be purchaser offered Turner 300 guineas for it. He replied that it was his "200 guinea size" only, and offered to take a commission at that price for any subject of the same size, but with the *Téméraire* itself he would not part. Another offer was subsequently made from America, which again Turner declined. He had already mentally included the picture, it would seem, amongst those to be bequeathed to the nation; and in one of the codicils to his will, in which he left each of his executors a picture to be chosen by them in turn,

the *Téméraire* was specially excepted from the pictures they might choose.[1]

Edward T. Cook, *A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery.*

[1] Mr. W. Hale White recently drew up for Mr. Ruskin, from official records, the following history of the *Téméraire*. To him and to Mr. Ruskin I am indebted for permission to insert the history here. It will be seen that Turner was right in calling his picture the *Fighting Téméraire*, and the critic who induced him to change the title in the engraving to the *Old Téméraire* wrong: —

"The *Téméraire*, second-rate, ninety-eight guns, was begun at Chatham, July, 1793, and launched on the 11th September, 1798. She was named after an older *Téméraire* taken by Admiral Boscawen from the French in 1759, and sold in June, 1784. The Chatham *Téméraire* was fitted at Plymouth for a prison ship in 1812, and in 1819 she became a receiving ship and was sent to Sheerness. She was sold on the 16th August, 1838, to Mr. J. Beatson for £5,530. The *Téméraire* was at the Battle of Trafalgar on the 21st October, 1805. She was next to the *Victory*, and followed Nelson into action; commanded by Captain Eliab Harvey, with Thomas Kennedy as first lieutenant. Her maintopmast, the head of her mizzenmast, her foreyard, her starboard, cathead and bumpkin, and her fore and main topsail yards were shot away; her fore and main masts so wounded as to render them unfit to carry sail, and her bowsprit shot through in several places. Her rigging of every sort was cut to pieces; the head of her rudder was taken off by the fire of the *Redoutable*; eight feet of the starboard side of the lower deck abreast of the mainmast were stove in, and the whole of her quarter-galleries on both sides carried away. Forty-six men on board of her were killed, and seventy-six wounded. . . . The *Téméraire* was built with a beakhead, or, in other words, her upper works were cut off across the catheads; a peculiarity which can be observed in Turner's picture. It was found by experience in the early part of the French war that this mode of construction exposed the men working the guns to the enemy's fire, and it was afterwards abandoned. It has been objected," adds Mr. White, "that the masts and yards in the picture are too light for a ninety-eight gun ship; but the truth is that when the vessel was sold she

was juryrigged as a receiving ship, and Turner, therefore, was strictly accurate. He might have seemed more accurate by putting heavier masts and yards in her ; but he painted her as he saw her. This is very important, as it gets rid of the difficulty which I myself have felt and expressed, that it was very improbable that she was sold all standing in sea-going trim, as I imagined Turner intended us to believe she was sold, and answers also the criticism just mentioned as to the disproportion between the weight of the masts and yards and the size of the hull." Part of the *Téméraire*, Mr. White tells me, is still in existence. Messrs. Castle, the shipbuilders of Millbank, have the two figures of Atlas which supported the sterngallery.

## SPRING

### (*BOTTICELLI*)

MARCEL REYMOND

OF all the ancient Italian painters, Botticelli has, for several years, been the master most in fashion. Why? The first reason should be sought in that reaction against the pseudo-classic style of the Renaissance which has seemed to be the dominant tendency of art in the Nineteenth Century. But this explanation does not suffice to tell us for what reasons the favour of the public has specially fallen upon Botticelli. Why select Botticelli rather than any other artist of the Fourteenth or Fifteenth Century? Why Botticelli and not Giotto, or Fra Angelico, or, to cite none but his contemporaries, why not Signorelli, or Ghirlandajo? It is because Fra Angelico's art is too religious for our century and Giotto's art too philosophical, or, at least, it is because our century no longer thinks of demanding from its artists, as in the time of Giotto and Fra Angelico, the expression of the moral questions with which it is occupied. And if we seem to-day somewhat indifferent to the art of Ghirlandajo, or Signorelli, it is because their thought is too grave and because we desire before all else that art shall bring smiles into our laborious life; we demand that it shall give repose to our tired brains by charming us with the vision of all terrestrial beauties, without exacting any labour or any effort from our minds.

In this quest of beauty, our curious minds, which know so many things and which have been able to compare the works of the most diverse civilizations, are perpetually seeking novelty, eager for rare forms, and inimical to everything banal and to everything that ordinary life brings before our eyes. And in our *fin de siècle* we have been so much the more prone to subtle pursuits because for some time our French art has seemed to take delight in the forms of a gross realism.

This refinement of art, this intimate analysis of form and thought, this love of sensual beauty, had appeared at the court of the Medici by the same causes that prompt us to seek them; they are the fruit of a society that has attained the highest degree of well-being, wealth and knowledge.

This kind of art lasted only for a moment in Florence. It is correct to say that Florentine art did not seem destined to speak the charms of feminine beauty. From its beginning, this school had been stamped by Giotto with the philosophic impress, and for two centuries its artists had been before everything else, thinkers, occupied more with moral ideas than with the beauty of form.

The first in Florence to be enthralled by the charm of beautiful eyes was the poor Filippo Lippi. It was he who created that new form of art which was to continue with Botticelli, his pupil, and which attained its perfection under the hands of Leonardo. If, to the Lucrezia Buti of Filippo Lippi, we join Botticelli's Simonetta and Leonardo's Monna Lisa, we should have the poem of love sung by Florentine genius under its most exquisite form.



SPRING.
*Botticelli.*

What Botticelli was, *Spring* will tell us; and this work is so significant, its essence expresses the thought of the master so clearly that it has preserved all its charm for us, although its particular meaning is not known to us. We call it *Spring*, but if one of the figures in the picture really represents Spring, it is only an accessory figure; and, moreover, this name given to the picture is entirely modern. Vasari says that it represents *Venus surrounded by the Graces*, but if we find the three Graces in the picture, it is not likely that the principal figure represents Venus. In my opinion, it is that principal figure that is the key to the picture; it is for this figure that everything has been done, and this it is, above all, that we must interrogate if we wish to know Botticelli's meaning. Evidently it is neither Venus, nor Spring; and the precision of the features, and the fidelity of the smallest details of the costume make us believe that we are in the presence of a veritable portrait. . . . Around her, Nature adorns herself with flowers; Spring and the Graces surround her like a train of Fays. Here is one of the familiar poetical forms of the Fifteenth Century; and, doubtless, by attentively reading the Florentine poets, we should discover the meaning of all the allegorical figures that Botticelli has united in his work and which we do not understand.[1]

But whatever may be the particular meaning of each of

1 See notably the *Stanze* of Politian, where one will find nearly all the details of Botticelli's picture; the shady grove, the flowery meadow, even the attitudes and the garments of the personages. Is it not a figure of Botticelli's which is thus described: —

> "She is white and white is her robe,
> All painted with flowers, roses, and blades of grass."

these figures, it is certain that here we have to do with love and beauty, and that perhaps in no other work may we find the charm of woman described in more passionate accents.

In this world of feminine fascination Botticelli loved everything. He knows the attraction of the toilet and of jewels, but he knows above all that no gem and no invention of man can rival the beauty of the female form. He was the first to understand the exquisite charm of silhouettes, the first to linger in expressing the joining of the arm and body, the flexibility of the hips, the roundness of the shoulders, the elegance of the leg, the little shadow that marks the springing of the neck, and, above all, the exquisite carving of the hand. But, even more, he understood "*le prestige insolent des grands yeux*," — large eyes, full, restless, and sad, because they are filled with love.

Look at these young maidens of Botticelli's. What a heavenly vision! Did Alfred de Musset know these veiled forms that seem to float over the meadow and did he think of them in the sleeplessness of his nights of May? Did he think of that young girl whose arm rises supple as the stem of a flower, of that young Grace so charming in the frame of her fair hair confined by strings of pearls, or, indeed, of that *Primavera*, who advances so imperiously beautiful, in her long robe of brocade, scattering handfuls of flowers that she makes blossom, or of that young mother more charming still in her modest grace, with her beautiful eyes full of infinite tenderness.

And around this scene, what a beautiful frame of verdure and flowers! Nature has donned her richest festal

robes; the inanimate things, like the human beings, all speak of love and happiness, and tell us that the master of this world is that little child with bandaged eyes, who amuses himself by shooting his arrows of fire.

To say a word about the technique of this work, we should remark that Botticelli always painted in fresco or distemper, and that he did not seek the supple modelling that painting in oil affords; and, on the other hand, he submitted profoundly to the influence of Pollaiolo; he observed Nature with the eyes of a goldsmith; and he painted his works as if, working a niello or enamel, he had to set each figure in gold-wire.

Finally, is it necessary to speak of the date of the *Primavera?* This would occasion a long discussion if the space were accorded me. Let it suffice to say that the biography written by Vasari merits no credence, that it has been unfortunately accepted by the majority of historians, and that we have not yet a good chronology of Botticelli's works, nor even a simple catalogue. As for the chronology, most historians, relying upon Vasari, place nearly all of Botticelli's works before his trip to Rome in 1481. I think, on the contrary, and I will prove it elsewhere, that the great productive period of Botticelli belongs to the ten last years of the century and that the *Primavera* should be classed in this period. The *Primavera* represents, with *The Birth of Venus* and *The Adoration of the Magi*, the culminating point of Botticelli's art.

Jouin, *Chefs-d'œuvre: Peinture, Sculpture, Architecture* (Paris, 1895–97).